EXPLORATIONS IN DISCURSIVE ECOLOGY: ADDRESSING LANDSCAPE CHANGE WITH RURAL NORTH CAROLINIANS

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ABSTRACT

GABRIEL CUMMING: Explorations in Discursive Ecology:
Addressing Landscape Change with Rural North Carolinians
(Under the direction of J. Robert Cox)

The rapid spread of suburban and exurban development is dramatically altering landscapes across North Carolina, thereby threatening the ecological and cultural heritage of numerous rural communities. These communities typically lack the institutional capacity for organized response to landscape change, so rural residents who deplore the degradation of valued local assets often feel powerless to protect them. Conservation and land use planning advocates, meanwhile, have failed to involve most of these rural North Carolinians in natural resource management initiatives.

In order to attract broader support, I argue that resource management agents must establish the relevance of their campaigns to the values, experiences, and concerns that rural community members share. Toward that end, I propose that natural resource management initiatives be designed with regard for *local ecological discourses*: ways in which members of a particular community socially construct their environment through communication. This study tested the hypotheses that 1) local discourses are ecologically interrelated with other elements of local ecosystems and therefore differ among communities and regions, and 2) arguments for collective natural resource management can garner broad-based community support if framed through these local discourses.

I collaborated with local partners to conduct community projects at five sites in rural North Carolina. Four of the sites were located in the Piedmont region near Charlotte; the fifth site (Macon County) was located in the Mountain region. At each site, we employed an *iterative participatory research model*, in which analyses were repeatedly refined through community input.

Through analysis of project data within and across sites and regions, I characterize discourse as an ecological phenomenon: its interactions with other ecosystem properties, as well as its within-site (*alpha*), between-site (*beta*) and regional/inter-regional (*gamma*) diversities. Then I present evidence that the salient narratives (shared stories) identified through each community project were persuasive to local community members at large, including those who had not previously participated in the projects. This study's findings suggest that a discursive approach could improve resource management agents' ability to help communities protect the landscapes they call home.

Dedicated to my community partners and the places they love.

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Over the course of the past six years, I have been fortunate enough to take part in a series of incredible collaborative research efforts across rural North Carolina. This dissertation is my report of that work, but the work itself is not mine—it belongs to everyone who took part in it. All told, at least 1200 people have participated in the projects described here. While I am indebted to them all, I want to extend special recognition to those individuals listed here (a listing of project participants is also found in Appendix A).

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THE DISCURSIVE ECOLOGY OF NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

1.1. Introduction

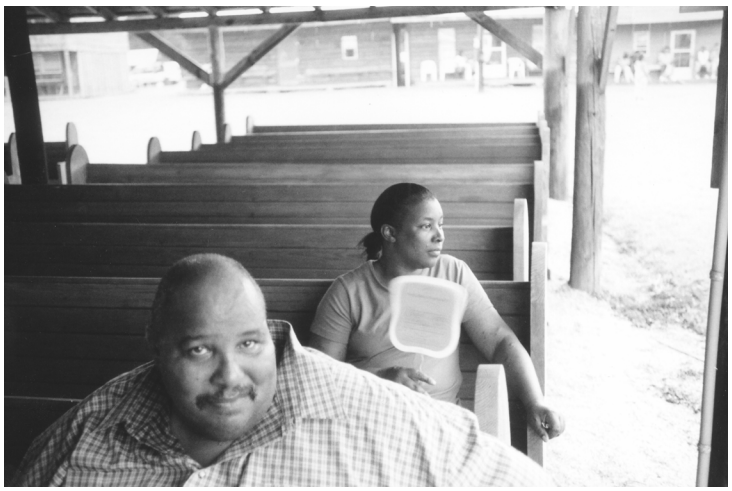

Figure 1.1. Spencer Graham under the arbor, Mott's Grove Campground.

"It's holy ground." That is how Spencer Graham described Mott's Grove Campground, site of an annual religious revival event known as camp meeting. For more than a century, local African-American families of Catawba County have gathered here each August—during "laying by time," a lull in the agricultural work calendar (Freeze 1995)—to celebrate faith and enjoy fellowship. For a few years recently, I have joined them.

During camp meeting, which lasts two weeks, families relocate from their homes to cabins on the Campground. In the language of the Campground, these are called *tents*.

Several times a day, attendees are summoned to the *arbor*, an open-sided roofed pavilion in the center of the Campground, for preaching and singing. Evening preaching takes place as the sky darkens and the droning crescendos of crickets and tree frogs fill the steamy air. As the invited preacher of the night launches forcefully into his sermon, a late-summer storm often billows down the Catawba River corridor behind him. Rain drums upon the tin roof, and flashes of lightning punctuate each thundering moral exhortation. In the dim glow of bare light bulbs strung overhead, the faithful rise to sing and shout with the storm.

When I have sat on the porch of Spencer's tent, talk has ranged from the joys of home-cooked camp meeting meals (historically prepared from pigs and chickens slaughtered on-site) to the old family homeplace, now submerged beneath nearby Lake Norman. Nothing is discussed in explicitly "environmental" or "ecological" terms, but conversations such as these can nonetheless help to guide natural resource management by offering insight into *local ecological discourses*—ways in which rural residents circulate meanings about, and thereby socially construct, their environment (Fiske 1989, Cantrill and Oravec 1996).

My ethnographic research in rural North Carolina explores whether natural resource conservation can be made more effective by understanding and engaging these local ecological discourses. I will make the case that the discursive construction of the environment is an ecological process, since it is integral to human interaction with the biophysical landscape and the other organisms that inhabit it. Ingold insists that "human beings must simultaneously be constituted both as organisms within systems of ecological relations, and as persons within systems of social relations" (2000: 3). I see

ecological discourse as arising from, and situated within, both of these sets of relations simultaneously; from this standpoint, the posited distinction between "the biogenetic and sociocultural dimensions of human life" (Ingold 2000: 2) appears to be more an artifact of academic compartmentalization than a reflection of lived human experience.

While a variety of organisms construct or change their environment physically, people also do so socially, through discourse (Schulz 2005). The physical process by which an organism, using available biophysical resources, modifies its surroundings has been termed "niche construction" (Day, Laland, and Odling-Smee 2003: 80). Niche construction alters not only the ecological parameters experienced by all organisms in a system, but also those inherited by subsequent generations. Social construction, whereby people draw upon available discursive fields to develop a particular cultural perspective on the environment, has a similar effect: it influences the views and values not only of people within the present-day community, but of those in subsequent generations (Schulz 2005).

Human beings, then, leave both a physical and a discursive inheritance in their wake. Moreover, the two are dialectically interconnected: human culture is continually affected by the biophysical environment, and that environment is continually affected by cultural practices. Any landscape, as understood through historical ecology, is a record of these cultural-biophysical interactions over time (Balée 1998; Crumley 1994b).

Natural resource management, which is concerned with the sustainable use of resources today and into the future, should therefore take into account the socio-cultural, as well as biophysical, aspects of humans' ecological role. Ethnographic field research, which involves spending time and talking extensively with people in a particular location,

can be helpful in addressing this need (Brosius and Russell 2003). An ethnographer can gain insight into the articulation and circulation of beliefs and values regarding the environment among members of a given human population. Perhaps even more importantly, such research may improve *resource management agents*'[1] ability to work effectively with that population to effect conservation in the local landscape. My dissertation research investigates both of these possibilities.

My two guiding research questions are:

1. How do residents of rural North Carolina discursively construct their relationships with the environment, and how do these discursive constructions vary within and among communities?
2. If framed through local ecological discourse, can rationales for collective natural resource management attract broader public support and involvement, thereby potentially enhancing communities' capacity to protect valued environmental assets?

These questions comprise a progression from inductive to deductive study of ecological discourse (Patton 2002). The first question represents an exploratory inquiry into the ecology of discourse. Drawing upon participatory, ethnographic research conducted at five community sites in two North Carolina regions, I characterized ecological discourse in terms of the *narratives* (shared stories) through which community members expressed their connection to the local environment. I assessed the narrative diversity of each community's discourse and then compared among communities, examining the ways in which discourse varies across landscapes. Through these

[1] As used here, the generic term *resource management agent* applies to anyone whose goal is to implement measures that will help protect or sustain natural resources. Such an agent could be a member of the local community or not.

analyses, I tested the hypothesis that local discourses are ecologically interrelated with other elements of local ecosystems and therefore differ among communities and regions. The results of Question One are covered in chapters Three and Four.

The second question asks whether this ethnographic study of discourse can help to improve the local relevance of natural resource management initiatives. I hypothesized that the ecological narratives identified through the foregoing participatory, ethnographic research process would be supported by community members at large, including those who had not participating in the prior research. By testing this hypothesis, I gauged the potential of this approach to foster greater community involvement in collective natural resource management efforts. The results of Question Two are covered in Chapter Five.

During the remainder of Chapter One, I introduce the applied and theoretical problems that this body of research seeks to address: rapid landscape change and the lack of a systemic framework for understanding human-environment interactions, respectively. I argue that the elaboration of such a framework can be advanced by ecologically contextualizing discourse, thereby bridging perceived divides between positivist/constructivist research paradigms. Participatory exploration of ecological discourse, I go on to explain, can also bridge basic and applied research: I suggest that this approach can improve the practice of community-based natural resource management.

1.2. The applied problem: the challenge of rapid landscape change in rural North Carolina

Development is dramatically transforming rural landscapes across North Carolina, presenting the state's citizens with a formidable problem. I see this problem as having three parts: 1) the threat that the rapid spread of low-density development poses to rural ecological and cultural resources, 2) rural communities' lack of capacity to effectively guide this development, and 3) the failure of conservation/planning entities to engage in rural residents in sustainable natural resource management. I will address each of these issues in turn below.

1.2.1. Rapid landscape change

North Carolina's farm and forest land is being steadily consumed by suburban and exurban *sprawl*, "the process in which the spread of development across the landscape far outpaces population growth" (Ewing, Pendall, and Chen 2002: 3). In other words, the area of developed land is increasing both in aggregate and per capita terms. Between 1992 and 1997, land in North Carolina was developed at the fifth fastest rate in the nation (Brookings 2000). Metropolitan areas in North Carolina are now among the most sprawling in the United States. Sprawl is typically driven by low-density single-family residential development, which is usually separated from commercial districts and workplaces (Ewing, Pendall, and Chen 2002).

My research focuses on communities in two of North Carolina's three major land regions: the Piedmont and Mountains. Both regions are facing widespread sprawl. Sprawl in the Piedmont is primarily spreading outward from urban centers. The Charlotte area, which is one of my research focus areas, epitomizes this phenomenon. If

current trends continue, land around Charlotte will have been developed at a rate of 41 acres per day between 1980 and 2020 (Brookings 2000).

While urban areas are expanding in the Mountains too, much of the growth in that region is driven by a larger-scale population trend: an influx of second-home builders, retirees, and vacationers from throughout the nation, though mostly from the Southeast. Macon County, my Mountain research site, is an exemplary case. The county grew at a rate of 33.5 percent between 1990 and 2003, which outstripped census predictions: in 1990 the population was projected to reach 30,000 by the year 2020, but the population has already exceeded that number. New estimates project a population of 40,000 by 2020 (US Census 2002; see Figure 1.2). Population growth is being driven entirely by immigration: among individuals born in Macon County, deaths actually exceeded births during the same time period (US Census 2005). Patterns of property ownership reveal that non-locals control much of the county's land area: 43% of the property parcels are owned by out-of-state residents, including 24% owned by Floridians and 10% owned by Georgians (Macon County Tax Department 2005). Due to the topography of the Southern Appalachians, sprawl in the Mountains is spreading not only horizontally but vertically, as in-migrants seek out mountainside lots with scenic vistas.

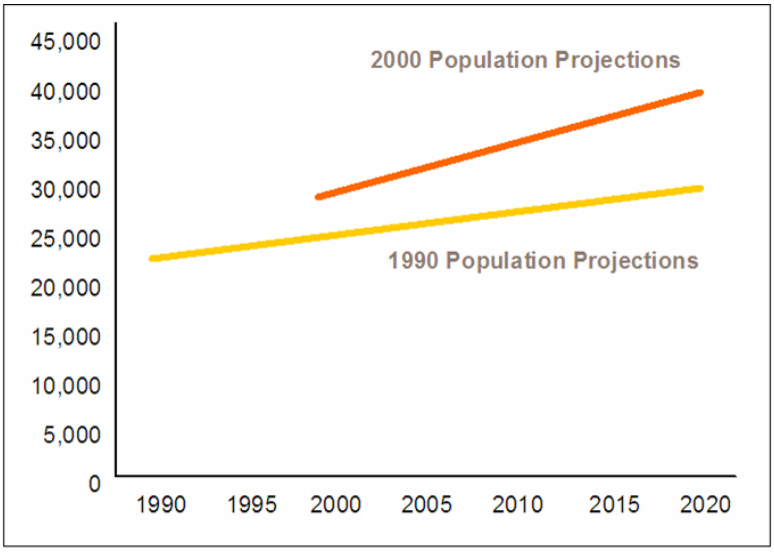

Figure 1.2. 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census population projections for Macon County (US Census 2002).

The negative impacts of sprawl are legion, including the economic burden of extending utilities to outlying areas, the social effects of isolation and segregation, and the environmental impact of pollution from increased single-occupancy vehicle traffic (Ewing, Pendall, and Chen 2002). From a landscape ecology perspective, the low-density, unplanned pattern of land cover change that characterizes sprawl has a wide range of effects on terrestrial and aquatic systems (US EPA 2001: 11-17). Sprawl contributes to habitat loss, which has emerged as the leading threat to biodiversity and rare species; both decreased patch size and increased edge effects are key stressors (Fahrig 2003). Meanwhile, nonpoint source pollution (such as runoff from impervious surfaces, farmland, and lawns) has replaced point source pollution as the chief water-quality concern in the North Carolina Piedmont and Mountains (Rudek et al. 1998; this distinction is discussed further below).

1.2.2. Rural communities' lack of capacity to effectively manage landscape change

The damaging effects of sprawl development are compounded by a second factor: many rural communities are unprepared to control the course or pace of landscape change. Rudel (1989) has attributed this problem to the difference between traditions of land use decision-making in rural and urban areas. Land use decisions in the rural United States, he argues, have characteristically been the province of individual property owners; each person could use her land as she saw fit. When conflicts arose among land uses on neighboring parcels, the issue was resolved through a handshake agreement among the parties involved. This system was feasible because low rural population densities minimized the likelihood of conflict and the number of potential stakeholders. Also, relative demographic stability meant that rural residents tended to know each other and respect shared cultural norms.

When an area begins to experience population growth and development, however, rural customs regarding land use decision-making are no longer adequate. Increased population densities increase the possibility of conflicts and the number of stakeholders who may be implicated. Furthermore, the newcomers moving into the area are socially disconnected from the pre-existing rural populace, so they may not recognize local cultural conventions regarding arbitration of land use conflicts. Social pressure had had a regulating effect on rural community members: a landowner might refrain from contaminating a downstream neighbor's water supply, for example, for fear of offending that neighbor. These pressures do not necessarily restrain the new suburban settlers, however; these in-migrants may not even expect to know their neighbors. To effectively arbitrate among the growing number of dissociated stakeholders, the community must

establish formal institutions governing land use, e.g. planning ordinances. Suburban in-migrants are likely to expect such formal rules restricting land use, but long-time rural residents may regard them as impersonal, onerous, and unnecessary. To them, regulation represents the undesirable conclusion that an ethic of neighborliness is no longer sufficient to achieve mutually-satisfactory land use outcomes.[2] As a result, rural communities and their political leaders often hesitate to craft formal land use management institutions until they have been thoroughly convinced that such institutions are necessary. By that point, however, the opportunity for effective land use management may have largely passed: landowners and developers will have likely exploited the lack of regulation for their short-term gain, fragmenting the landscape through unplanned development (Freyfogle 2003).

The time lag between the advent of rapid landscape change and the enhancement of communities' capacity to manage this change results in a land use outcome that no one intended: a haphazard mixture of uses in which housing developments and shopping centers are interspersed among forestland and farm fields. The rural character that locals prized and newcomers sought is diminished or gone, and the ecological integrity of the landscape has been largely compromised. This is the kind of result that Hardin (1968) termed a "tragedy of the commons:" a situation in which the unrestricted, self-interested exploitation of a resource by individual users leads to the diminishment of that resource for all users. If, as my own research suggests, rural North Carolinians overwhelmingly dislike an unplanned sprawl development pattern, then it is bitterly ironic that this pattern is becoming predominant across the state.

[2] These perspectival differences are further elaborated in discussion of Table 4.4 (Section 4.5).

If lack of coordination among rural North Carolinians produces a land use outcome that is largely unwanted, then land use management can be seen as a *collective action problem* (Olson 1971, Ostrom 2004): how can rural community members cooperate to protect valued landscape assets before they are degraded? The formidable challenge in addressing such a problem is that all stakeholders are implicated in the solution: individuals must accept infringements on their individual rights for the collective good. Like the water quality threats mentioned above, this is a *nonpoint source* environmental issue. Landmark environmental legislation passed in the United States since the 1970s has largely served to regulate *point source* environmental threats, problems that could be addressed by restricting the actions of a few major players (usually industries). Recent decades, however, have seen increasing recognition of the threats posed by *nonpoint source* environmental impacts—those caused by a large number of individual actors (US EPA 2007, Vig and Kraft 2000). Climate change is the quintessential non-point source problem, since it represents the cumulative effects of actions taken by much if not all of the world's population, present and past. Though less often considered at a global scale, the nonpoint source challenge represented by land use is equally widespread. Such nonpoint source problems cannot be resolved through technical fixes alone; they ultimately require modifications to human behavior, which is a more formidable proposition.

Ultimately, rural community members' lack of control over the fate of their landscapes represents nothing less than a failure of democracy. Most citizens feel profoundly disempowered with regard to land use change beyond the boundaries of their own property—so disempowered, in fact, that they are largely unaware of their right to

affect the process. I believe that resource management agents and researchers alike face an ethical mandate to address this injustice.

1.2.3. Failure to engage rural populations in natural resource management initiatives

When a landscape is rapidly changing and local communities are not yet prepared to respond collectively, intervention by external resource management agents can be vitally important: representatives of conservation/planning organizations or agencies can assist communities in developing the capacity to protect their environmental assets. A growing number of non-profit and state conservation organizations are rising to the challenge, and in the five-year time period from 1999 through 2003 these entities placed more than 280,000 acres under conservation through land purchase, conservation easements, and protective covenants. However, with an estimated 500,000 new acres of land developed across the state every five years, protecting natural resources remains an uphill struggle (Land for Tomorrow 2005: 4, 14). Resource management agents' effectiveness has been limited by their inability to attract widespread support or interest among rural populations.

The case of Catawba Lands Conservancy, a non-profit land trust[3] and one of my research partners, is illustrative of this phenomenon. The Conservancy serves the lower Catawba River Basin in North Carolina, a six-county region with a population approaching 1.5 million **(**US Census 2004**)**. The organization has about 1,500 members, a miniscule segment of the region's residents. Moreover, approximately seventy-five

[3] Land trusts constitute a growing network of local conservation organizations: there are currently more than 1,600 throughout the United States, including twenty-three in North Carolina (LTA 2007, CTNC 2007). They work with property owners on a voluntary basis to place land under conservation. As such, they are not usually directly involved in helping communities build planning capacity, but they can play an important role in the non-regulatory protection of valued natural resources.

percent of these members are from Mecklenburg County, the urban county that includes Charlotte, while most of the Conservancy's land protection projects take place in the more rural, outlying counties (Sharp 2005). Membership is only one proxy for the level of public support, but it is evident that organizations such as this one are not reaching most of the people in their service areas.

One might conclude that rural residents are largely unconcerned about landscape change and uninterested in protecting their rural environment. My research suggests that this is not the case, however. Rather, I see the failure of resource management agents to engage rural populations as primarily a failure of *relevance*: most rural community members do not see resource management initiatives as relevant to their experiences, values, and concerns. In many cases, conservation/planning advocates may literally be "speaking the wrong language," failing to frame their messages through the local ecological discourses that connect community members to their local environments. By furthering understanding of these discourses, my aim is help address the three-part problem I have outlined above: if resource management agents in North Carolina can make their work more relevant to rural communities, then they will be better positioned to help those communities build capacity to gain control over rapid landscape change.

1.3. The theoretical problem: the need for an ecological approach to human perspectives

Enhancing the ability of resource management agents and communities to effectively guide landscape change requires, in my view, a more nuanced theoretical framework for understanding human-environment interactions. Research on the role of

human values and behavior in natural resource management (i.e. "human dimensions" research) has not been very "ecological" in the broad sense: it has failed to thoroughly examine the multi-scalar social and biophysical contexts in which values are conceived and expressed.

The contributions of Stephen Kellert and associates to the journal *Conservation Biology* during the 1990s (Kellert 1991, Kellert 1993, Kellert et al. 1996, Reading and Kellert 1993) provide a prominent example of the shortcomings that characterize much human dimensions research. Kellert's work was innovative in its systematic gauging of broadly-shared cultural values and attitudes regarding particular species. Indeed, he deemed his etic typology of attitudes toward wildlife so generalizable that he applied it, largely unchanged, in locations as disparate as Japan and Montana. Kellert's attitudinal surveys provide straightforward measures of values regarding a given natural resource among multiple constituencies, thus enabling managers to potentially design conservation programs and outreach in ways that will resonate with a particular constituency. The field of human dimensions research is rife with similar value and attitudinal typologies (e.g. Brown and Reed 2000; Fulton, Manfredo, and Lipscomb 1996; Manfredo, Teel, and Bright 2004; Dunlap et al. 2000; Williams et al. 1992).

I believe that such attitudinal research is insufficient to suggest how resource management agents might be able to engage communities more effectively in conservation initiatives, however. The approach has two limitations in this regard. First, it locates people outside the resource, leaving an assumed nature-culture divide unexamined (Ingerson 1994). Managers, then, only need to consider humans' existing or potential "impacts" on a resource, and figure out how best to mitigate those. Such a

model ignores possibilities, raised by historical ecology, that a community may be considered a part of an ecological system, that that system may be both "natural" and "cultural," and that the relationship between people and the environment may be dialectical rather than unidirectional (Patterson 1994; see Section 1.4.3).

A second, related criticism of the attitudinal survey approach is that it does little to illuminate the discursive practices through which people's attitudes are formed and articulated. Without an understanding of how members of a particular community circulate meanings about the environment (Fiske 1989), resource management agents and researchers are unlikely to frame messages with respect for local communicative and metacommunicative norms (Briggs 1986).

In short, most human dimensions research of this kind tends to reduce human-environment interaction to a single, unidirectional relationship, in which a person attaches a value to a resource. Researchers would be better served by considering the systems of ecological and social relationships that shape, and are shaped by, human values. Patterson, following Mészáros (1972), describes this joint natural-social system as a *totality*: "a dialectically structured and historically determined unity that exists in and through the diverse interpenetrations, connections, and contradictions that join its constituent parts regardless of whether the components are observable or unobservable." He admonishes that "it is impossible to understand a totality merely by studying the parts" (230).

1.3.1. The importance of scale

A more systemic view of human-environment interaction requires greater attention to the critical ecological concept of *scale*, the "[s]patial or temporal dimension

of an object or process" (Turner, Gardner, and O'Neill 2003: 3, adapted from Forman 1995). Kellert and others have examined human values across different spatial scales, but the choice of scales has largely been a matter of convenience. How do we know that selected scales of analysis will provide meaningful information about human values regarding a given resource? For obvious logistical reasons, populations studied in social science research tend to correspond with management jurisdictions—e.g. the residents of a given county or the users of a given park. Such jurisdictions may not constitute the most meaningful ecological or social frames of analysis, however.

As common property research has shown, resource management institutions are most effective when their scaling matches that of the resource being managed. A management jurisdiction that encompasses only part of a resource cannot effectively deal with larger-scale ecological processes, while a jurisdiction larger than the resource results in policies that are too generalized to be maximally effective (Berkes and Folke 1998, Bidwell Pearce 2003, McKean 1996). The same logic applies to human dimensions research: from an ecological perspective, the most appropriate human population to study is one scaled to match the resource of interest. The definition of a resource's constituency, then, proceeds from the resource itself: upon identifying the resource, the researcher should then consider the set of people who have a connection to that resource.

Researchers should also consider human social scaling. Just as ecological scaling proceeds from the resource being studied, social scaling proceeds from the views of the people being studied: what social units do they consider meaningful? Who claims a stake in the management of a given resource, and are those claims mutually recognized? The answers to these questions can be used to discursively define the *community* that is

involved in a particular resource management initiative (this conception of *community* is discussed further in sections 1.4.3 and 1.5.2).[4]

The scaling of inquiry into human-environment interactions can productively proceed either from the scaling of a resource or a community; establishing congruency between the two will likely prove challenging in any case. A theoretical approach derived from historical ecology and common property theory suggests criteria for establishing appropriate analytical scaling. Historical ecology invites us to consider the scale(s) at which human cultural identity and the biophysical environment have become a discernable *totality* (as defined by Patterson, above). These diachronic inferences regarding landscape history can inform a consideration of resource management scaling derived from common property theory: they can suggest the most appropriate scaling of the human populations to be involved when studying the management of a given resource, or the resource scales to take into account when studying the environmental values of a given population.

In practice, the constraints of a given project may prevent a researcher from optimizing the social-ecological scaling of his analysis; this has been my own experience. To the extent that it is feasible, however, the researcher should remain attentive to scaling of the phenomena under observation, as this will prove crucial to understanding their ecological properties. I will revisit the theme of scale throughout my discussions in this and subsequent chapters.

Locating human values in social and biophysical landscapes, and characterizing their scaling across those landscapes, requires negotiating tensions between intellectual

[4] Worster (1992) takes a comparable approach, characterizing "community" as the stakeholders in a given resource.

paradigms along two axes: 1) positivism versus constructivism and 2) basic versus action research. In Section 1.4, I address the first of these perceived binaries by theoretically locating discourse in the landscape. In Section 1.5, I address the second perceived binary by suggesting how applied research can advance a discursive understanding of human-environment interactions.

1.4. Locating discourse ecologically

> I remember
> the message I almost forgot
> I knew. I have my grandfather's word
> on an acre of black dirt, my father's
> on four hundred more. What
> they lost is not lost. Here I am.
> When I look up the future's a field for me.
> I am the girl in the midst of the harvest.
>
> I am the harvest.
>
> --Kathryn Stripling Byer, from "Daughter" (1986: 6-7)

The words of North Carolina poet laureate Byer capture a relationship between speaker and place—a relationship central to her identity, expressed from a perspective that is uniquely hers. In this section, I elaborate an interdisciplinary theoretical framework for encountering and interpreting these relationships as they are expressed by rural North Carolinians. First, I propose a relevant conception of *discourse* and extend it to *ecological discourse*. I also relate *discourse* to *narrative* and introduce *ecological narrative*. Then I locate discourse in the biophysical landscape by considering the role, first, of discourse in community, and second, of community in landscape. In so doing, I

suggest that the ecological study of discourse represents an intersection of positivist and constructivist research traditions.

1.4.1. Ecological Discourse

Fiske defines discourse as "a language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area" (1989: 14). This definition points to several key characteristics of discourse as I will frame it: 1) discourse is "language in use" (Brown and Yule 1983: 1); 2) discourses address a particular topic; 3) they emerge in a particular social context; and 4) they legitimate a particular position on a topic, thus playing a constitutive role in future social contexts. I will elaborate on each of these traits.

Discourse is not a fixed phenomenon but a process of using language socially, which Fiske terms "discursive practice" (1989: 14, see also Foucault 1977: 199). A discourse can be characterized, then, not by *what* topics it addresses but *how* it addresses them. According to Ricoeur, discourse "is always realised temporally and in the present," as a speech event; it always has a "speaker" to whom it refers, though this may be a societal group or institution rather than an individual; it always claims to represent something, "a world;" and it is always directed toward someone (1981: 198). Rephrased in Jakobson's terms, this speech event is a *message* sent by an *addresser*, with reference to a *context*, to an *addressee* (1999: 54). Ricoeur (1981) identifies an inherent dialectic between discourse as event and discourse as meaning. The remaining traits of discourse that concern us relate to its social creation of meaning.

For Jakobson, the *context* to which discourse refers is its topic area. Foucault describes this discursive identification of topic as "the delimitation of a field of objects"

(1977: 199). In other words, a topic is defined to include some factors and exclude others. In a broader sense, however, *context* denotes the entire social milieu within which a discourse develops—a context that encompasses the *addresser* and *addressee* as well. Foucault explains how certain discourses have "proliferated" in a given society at a given historical moment, due to "political, economic, and technical incitement" (1999: 516). Bourdieu describes this process using an economic metaphor: a given social context is a market for discourses, which are assigned value based on the material or symbolic profit that their "producers" and "consumers" derive from them (1999: 502, 506).

Since discourses are produced by particular individuals or groups in particular social circumstances, it follows that those discourses serve the interests of their "producers" or "addressers." It is this fourth trait of discourse that is of most interest to Foucault and associated theorists: the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of social power relations. Beyond simply delimiting a topic area, discursive practice involves "the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Thus, each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices" (Foucault 1977: 199). Bove describes this "regulating" function of discourse as constraining what is considered possible or true in a given context and controlling individuals' identities and decisions (1995: 54-58).

When a discourse is hegemonic, its regulating function may go largely unnoticed, since it has become naturalized. It is exposed, however, when conflict arises between different interest groups, each of which adopts a discursive position that serves its own ideological interests. Following Laclau and Mouffe, DeLuca (1999) discusses this

process of discursive contestation through the language of *articulation*. A group *articulates* elements within a discursive field in a certain way, positing relationships among them that support its position on an issue. If successful, this group can control the framing of public debate on that issue. To challenge this group, a counter-movement may attempt to *disarticulate* the discursive elements and *rearticulate* them in a new way (DeLuca 1999).

The preceding characterization suggests how discourse is simultaneously a conversational phenomenon, realized in the act of communication, and a process of social production. As Jaworski and Coupland note,

> discourse analysis is able to use micro-level (linguistic, textual, intertextual) commentary to explain macro-level (societal, cultural, ideological) processes…. [T]he sorts of structuring that interactants submit to and reproduce in their talk form a core dimension of social structure…. Therefore… there is a direct link between conversation production of the interaction order and production of the social order" (1999: 215).

The study of discourse, then, offers a valuable point of entry into an understanding of social dynamics in a given context, because it draws evidence directly from the communication of the actors involved.

The *environment* is a prime example of a topic that benefits from the explicit interrogation of discursive practice. Herndl and Brown assert that "[i]n a very real sense, there is no objective environment in the phenomenal world, no environment separate from the words we use to represent it. We can define the environment and how it is affected by our actions only through the language we have developed to talk about these issues" (1996: 3). According to Cantrill and Oravec, the "environment we experience and affect" is largely a social construct, made up of symbols that we have reified as "real" or "natural" (1996: 2). This is not to say that the biophysical world does not exist,

but that human interaction with it is mediated by discourse. Drawing upon Foucault and Said, Mazel (1996) adds that the social construction of the environment is an exercise of power, because it determines what "counts" as environment.

Seen from this perspective, disagreements on environmental issues may actually reflect different ways of conceiving of and talking about the world. Evernden (1992) attributes environmental policy disputes to different constructions of *nature*, another term laden with cultural connotations. As Cronon puts it, "'nature' is not nearly so natural as it seems" (1995a: 25). Ideas of nature are important reflections of social values, since "nature is tacitly asserted as the authority upon which appropriate behavior can be modeled" (Evernden 1992: 16). Therefore, arguments about nature may also be arguments about the "social ideal of proper order" or "what constitutes a good life" (5-6). Every society defines *nature* in its own way, and interest groups within a society may identify different aspects of ecosystems—e.g. cooperative versus competitive interactions among organisms—to justify contrasting ideals. So, while Evernden acknowledges the field of ecology as the current arbiter of scientific environmental knowledge, he maintains that "what ecology is may be less important than what it is believed to be" (8).

Discourses on the environment have often been linked with those of *rurality*. This concept is similarly ambiguous, and its usage typically rests on unexamined assumptions (Vandergeest and DuPuis 1996). Mormont asserts that "rurality is not a thing or a territorial unit, but derives from the social production of a set of meanings" (1990: 36). Buttel argues that predominant environmental discourses are changing the way rural areas are symbolized in the United States: previously they were associated with an underprivileged population in need of assistance, but now they are often seen as

ecological assets that should be conserved. In this latter view, the rural population is outmoded and should gradually be removed, allowing for a return of the wilderness (1992: 22-23; see further discussion of "wilderness" below).

Constructions of *environment*, *nature*, *ecology*, *rurality*, and related concepts vary among present-day societies, evidencing their cultural subjectivity. Lohmann, for example, has identified key differences between the ways people in the "West" and in Thailand express their relationship with the environment. Western conservationists must be cognizant of these differences if they want to effectively participate in Thai environmental debates (1995). Within a society competing environmental visions may also emerge, diverging with each other but reflecting a shared discursive context. A prominent conservation controversy in Iceland, for instance, divides proponents of "green nature" and "dark nature"—those who believe the island's volcanic landscape should be a verdant forest, versus those who consider its barren plains of igneous rock both natural and beautiful. These discursively-shaped models of the natural world, which Ásgeir (2000) calls "discoursed nature," oppose one another but are both uniquely Icelandic. Cronon introduces a multiplicity of views on nature that are prevalent in the present-day United States, including *nature as naïve reality*, *nature as moral imperative*, *nature as commodity*, *nature as demonic other*, and *nature as contested terrain* (1995a: 34-51).

Though manifest in language, different societies' discursive constructions of the environment can have material effects on the biophysical world. This connection is argued most famously and controversially by Lynn White, Jr., who lays much of the blame for global environmental degradation on Western Christian and scientific conceptions of nature. In an argument consistent with the niche construction perspective

referenced earlier, White notes that "[a]ll forms of life modify their contexts," but none so much as humans (1996: 3). He describes the discursive ascendancy, since 1850, of "the Baconian creed that scientific knowledge means technological power over nature" as the most important event in history since the invention of agriculture (4). "[W]e shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis," he concludes, "until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man" (14).

Particular cultural perspectives on the environment, such as those White describes, can be materially reflected in resource management decisions. For example, Byerly argues that the design of National Parks in the United States is based in a European landscape aesthetic. In effect, park administrators "produce and market an interpretation of nature's text" (1996: 52-53). The designation and protection of *wilderness*, according to Cronon, also originated from a particular constellation of Euro-American cultural values that emerged in the nineteenth century, specifically the notion of religious encounter with wild landscapes (the *sublime*) and the myth of the *frontier* as a "crucible of American identity" (1995b: 73-76). During the same time period, Frederick Law Olmsted literally constructed many of the nation's most celebrated landscapes, such as New York's Central Park and Biltmore estate in the North Carolina mountains. Most visitors now admire these places for their "natural" beauty, rather than recognizing them as physical enactments of ideas held by Olmsted and his contemporaries (Spirn 2005).

Discourse, then, not only structures human representation of the environment, but has a determinative role in human interaction with ecosystems. Harré, Brockmeier, and Mühlhäusler posit not only a "language of ecology"—the way in which people

communicate about the environment—but an "ecology of language," in which languages play an ecological role in the environments where they are used (1999: 2). I will characterize *ecological discourse* in this dual sense, referring to communication that not only reifies a perception of ecological relationships, but simultaneously participates in those relationships. Discursive practices, then, help to shape both the socially constructed "environment" and the biophysical environment.

1.4.2. Ecological narrative

People do not draw upon the full complexity of discourse in order to give meaning to a topic; rather, they select from various discursive categories to create a *narrative*, which positions them as a subject (Hajer 1995). Discourse can be seen as a framework that embraces "particular combinations of narratives" (Barnes and Duncan 1992: 8). It is through narrative, then, that we can learn how people discursively negotiate their own relationship with the environment.

In his classic study, Labov characterizes narrative as a "method of recapitulating past experience…" (1999: 225). This definition is too restrictive for my purposes, but Labov does identify a key function of narrative: it can serve as a way to organize our impressions our lives and imbue them with meaning. In Ricoeur's terms, narrative expresses the "historicity" of the human condition—the "fact that we make history, that we are immersed in history, that we are historical beings" (1981: 274).

As a discursive phenomenon, however, narrative does not simply reflect the lived experience of a single individual—it is socially constructed. Narratives, unlike stories, "are not idiosyncratic to individuals" (Rappaport 2000: 4). Miller describes them as stories that people tell to "collectively build a significant and orderly world around

themselves" (1995: 69). Narratives that are often repeated within a given social group reinforce certain worldviews and identities, but narratives can also be used to critique prevalent assumptions. This process of critiquing, revising, and creating narratives happens continually, because existing narratives are never completely sufficient in making sense of the world (Miller 1995).

Cronon (1992) sees narrative as the fundamental way that human beings make sense of their world. Just as they represent an ordering of discourse, they render causal order and significance out of the complex chaos that is the environment. In so doing, narratives provide moral compass, guiding future behavior. Satterfield and Slovic (2004) argue that narrative is an especially effective medium for expressing and elucidating environmental values, since they engage people both intellectually and emotionally, enable them to make sense of multifaceted issues, and help them to divine their own position.

By the same token, however, narratives share the powerful—and potentially dangerous—capacity of discourses to exclude elements and shape them to support a certain viewpoint. An effective ecological narrative makes its plot seem natural, thus obscuring the boundary between social construct and material reality (Cronon 1992). Indeed, historical ecology reveals that landscapes themselves can be read as "texts" in which narratives of cultural-environmental change are recorded. Like any narrative account, the history of a landscape should not be accepted uncritically; landscapes, like other texts, can be interpreted in different ways to support different agendas. Sensitivity to the ways in which narratives condition our reading of landscapes requires an ecological perspective that is not only historical but *historiographic*, capable of critical

historical analysis. Such a lens can enable an investigator to discern that a landscape does not have *a* history, but instead has multiple histories—competing, partial narratives whose interpretations of past human-environment interactions are used to legitimize particular future courses of action. Characterizing the diversity of ecological narratives that motivate land use decisions within and across communities is central to my analysis of community discourses in subsequent chapters.

1.4.3. Locating discourse in the landscape: community ecological discourses

Despite its attention to the social construction of the environment, the literature on environmental discourse has largely failed to explicitly theorize the relationship between discourse and ecological context. Most existing research has focused on the national-level political discourses of institutions and movements. *Ecocriticism*, "[t]he study of literature and the environment" (Branch et al. 1998: xi), is primarily concerned with literary discourses that are approached through the hermeneutic analysis of *texts*, thus "distanciating" them from the context in which they were created (Ricoeur 1981: 131, 139-42). This approach reflects a broader "dislocation" of socio-cultural practices from the environment within the humanities and social sciences. Since anthropologist Franz Boas' reaction against simplistic biological/environmental determinism, much cultural research has veered in the opposite direction, discounting the role of the biophysical world in explaining cultural phenomena (Crumley 1998). Some postmodern/ constructivist scholarship goes so far as to challenge the very existence of a material "reality" that is not socially constructed (Patton 2002). Supporting this position is the view that (post)modernity and globalization have rendered locality irrelevant: Werlen, following Giddens, argues that "late-modern societies, cultures, and economies are no

longer spatially and temporally embedded. They are rather… 'disembedded'" (1999: 11; see also Giddens 1990).

Environmental research within the positivist tradition, meanwhile, continues to largely ignore discursive practices. Biological ecologists usually avoid the topic by 1) trying to remove humans entirely from their experiments or 2) conceptually locating humans outside the system being studied, so that only their "impacts" on it need be measured (a unidirectional model of the human-environment relationship that is implicitly affirmed by the attitudinal research described in Section 1.2). When people are studied ecologically, their behaviors tend to be interpreted much like those of any other organism—as straightforward reflections of environmental adaptation. With social processes of meaning circulation left unexamined, such human ecology scholarship upholds the same environmental determinisms that the constructivist school has reacted against (Balée 1998, Crumley 1994b, Crumley 1998).

Prevalent constructivist and positivist representations of human-environment interaction have both failed to fully grasp the significance of discourse as an *event* involving live actors, rather than simply a "distanciated" text (Ricoeur 1981). If, following Burke (1966) and Austin (1962) we regard language as a "social practice" rather than a simply "a medium for communication" (Colombo and Senatore 2005: 51), then it follows that discursive practice occurs in social and ecological *context*. I see assertions of placeless modernity as premature: humans are still very much biological creatures located in material environments. At the same time, it is simplistic to discount the significance of discourse in our ecological lives. I propose that an ecological theorization of discourse can help to avoid these two extremes. Since discourse-as-social-

practice only exists through interaction among people, I will first address the role of discourse in community and then the role of community in the landscape.

Locating discourse in *community* requires clarification of the latter concept, which is controversial in its own right. Agrawal and Gibson have critiqued the popular "conceptualization of communities as territorially fixed, small, and homogeneous;" none of those descriptors are necessarily justified, they argue (1999: 636). A long intellectual tradition has characterized *community* as spatially-bounded (Tönnies 1963), but social theorists have also forecast for more than a century that modernity would bring *community* to an end (Anderson 1983, Agrawal and Gibson 1999, Delanty 2003). Purportedly homogeneous "communities" have also been revealed frequently to conceal social divisions and inequalities; researchers who set out to study a "community" may end up working with only a segment of a local population, while inadvertently excluding others (Agrawal and Gibson 1999: 637, Neumann 2005: 146).

Given the problems with defining community, many scholars have called for its abandonment as a concept (Delanty 2003). Agrawal and Gibson suggest an alternate focus: *institutions*, understood as "sets of rules describing and prescribing human actions" (1999: 638). While important, however, I do not think that the concept of *institution* captures the full richness of *community*—an idea that, despite its ambiguity, has remained remarkably resilient. Not only does it continue to circulate within academic discourse, but I have discovered in my fieldwork that it is highly meaningful for rural North Carolinians. Delanty attributes the "enduring appeal" of community to "the search for belonging in the insecure conditions of modernity" (2003: 1). He argues that the term should not be abandoned just because it is contested—after all, most central social

science terms are (2). Brosius and Russell concur, calling instead for a renewed emphasize on, and inquiry into, community in conservation (2003). Toward this end, I propose to revisit *community* as a site of discursive and ecological intersection.

Gupta (1998) lays the theoretical groundwork for resurrecting a localized, discursive concept of *community*. The globalizing discourses of modernity are commonly deemed so overwhelming that they render location irrelevant: the same meanings, according to this view, are circulated throughout all "modern" societies. Gupta challenges this assumption through his theory of "alternative modernities" (9). He argues that every community experiences modernity, but each in its own way. How modernity is encountered in a given community depends on how national or global discourses are adapted, reconfigured, or resisted in the context of local realities. The negotiation between globalizing discourses and local socio-cultural complexes leads to a unique, hybrid local-global discourse in each case. One "version" of this discourse should not be privileged over others; all are equally "true" and "modern" (6, 9). Just as a habitat types are heterogeneously distributed across a landscape, so discursive formations are heterogeneously distributed across social space, with each community constructing its own "truths." If communities are seen as the sites in which groups of people interactively negotiate discursive fields, then they emerge as crucial units of analysis for understanding the role of discourse in day-to-day social life.

Rappaport contends that narrative, too, functions differently at the community scale. He draws a distinction between *dominant cultural narratives* and *community narratives*. The former are "known by most people in a culture" (2000: 4). They are "overlearned stories communicated through mass media or other large social and cultural

institutions and social networks" (4). The latter, as mentioned earlier, are stories "common among a group of people" (4). They "tell the members important things about themselves" (4). Personal stories are shaped in the context of the shared narratives told where a person lives. The relationship between stories and community narratives is reciprocal, however; when individuals' stories lead to the creation or modification of narratives, *social change* occurs (5). At the community level, then, narrative is contested and dynamic.

Importantly, Rappaport goes on to assert that narrative is an essential feature of community: "a community cannot be a community without a shared narrative" (2000: 6). This claim suggests what Friedland (2001) terms a "communicatively integrated community." Friedland sees community as partly imagined: like Gupta, he argues that "community communication ecologies" are hybrid, partly formed by top-down mass media forces and partly by interpersonal contacts.

In this sense, community can be seen as the "lifeworld" in which individuals apply interpretive *frames* (Goffman 1974) to the phenomena that surround them, thereby determining which phenomena hold *relevance* for understanding their experiences and guiding their decisions (Schutz 1970, Cefaï 1999). Individuals do not undertake these interpretations in isolation; their lifeworld, as Schutz observed, "is a world *shared* with a multiplicity of other individuals living and acting within it in common" (Zaner 1970: xii). Similarities and divergences among their "schemes of experience" are negotiated through cooperation and conflict (Cefaï 1999: 138).

How is this "communicatively integrated community," in which people socially construct hybrid discourses and community narratives, tied to place? Such a tie may not

be requisite, but I still see it as central in rural areas—both for those who live there and resource management agents who want to work there. As Lobao notes, the study of social life in rural areas is inherently spatial, because rurality itself is spatially determined (1996: 77). Wilkinson characterizes rural community as threefold, comprising "a locality, a local society, and a process of locality oriented collective actions" (1991: 2). In other words, there must be a place, people, and interactions among them. These interactions include discursive practices.

Drawing upon Wilkinson and my own fieldwork, then, I propose a discursively-informed, place-based definition of community: *the set of people who share a mutually-acknowledged connection to a mutually-recognized place or landscape*. This characterization allows for the inclusion of individuals who do not live in the immediate vicinity (because they have moved away to work, for example), as long as their connection to the place is recognized by the others who share that connection—thereby acknowledging the need for "belonging" identified by Delanty (2003: 1).

Such a definition is inherently subjective and contested, since there is unlikely to be a consensus as to who is a community member and who is not. The social boundaries of community, in this sense, are subject to prejudicial exclusions of many kinds, and these should be challenged but nonetheless recognized. In short, I contend that this definition approximates the implicit, vernacular concept of community used in areas of rural North Carolina where I have worked, and perhaps elsewhere well. As such, it may prove useful in effecting community-based initiatives in these areas.

The conception of *place* in human geography, also threefold, offers a framework for embedding community members' lived experience in the environment. *Place* is seen

as having three aspects: spatial *location*; *locale* (the physical setting); and *sense of place*, defined as "the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place" (Cresswell 2004: 7). Place, then, can be understood as simultaneously a physical and a cultural phenomenon. From a discourse research perspective, *sense of place* is the aspect of place that is discursively constructed.

If our goal is *landscape*-scale conservation, however, we must connect community not only to place, but also to *landscape*. Cresswell sees an opposition between place and landscape: *place* is something experienced by people who live there, while *landscape* is something viewed by outsiders (2004: 10). I see this dichotomy as limiting, however, and inconsistent with an ecological understanding of landscape. Ecologists Turner, Gardner, and O'Neill define a *landscape* as an "[a]rea that is spatially heterogeneous in at least one factor of interest" (2001: 3). The research focus of landscape ecology is the spatial configuration of ecological processes (4). To be considered ecological actors, then, people (and thus communities and discourses) must be located within landscapes, rather than only viewing them from outside. The concept of *landscape* used in historical ecology best addresses this need. As mentioned earlier, historical ecologists see landscapes as a physical record of the dialectical interactions between environmental and cultural forces over time. Like *place*, then, *landscape* emerges as both a cultural construct and a biophysical unit (Balée 1998: 24). Crumley and Marquardt link the two concepts by identifying *places* as sites within landscapes that "societies use and imbue with meaning" (1987: 1). The places where community members live and work, and to which they feel a sense of attachment, are an integral part of the landscape.

In landscape ecology, the presence of humans and human communities in landscapes has typically been expressed in terms of *land use*, "the way in which and the purposes for which humans employ the land and its resources" (Turner, Gardner, and O'Neill 2001: 86). Land use, in turn, can affect *land cover*, "the habitat or vegetation type present, such as forest, agriculture, and grassland" (86). The ecological effects of land use on landscape pattern and process are manifold. Dale et al. identify five ecological parameters that are particularly pertinent to the management of land use. First, the *temporal* setting of land use should be considered: the interaction of human activity with non-human ecological cycles, the effects of past land uses, and the long-term effects of current decisions (this concern with time scales is shared with historical ecology). Second, the impact of land use on the abundance of, distribution of, and interactions among *species* should be taken into account. Third, the constraints on land use placed by the abiotic and biotic characteristics of a given *place* (used here in a strictly physical sense) must be appreciated. Fourth, an understanding of *disturbance* regimes and human modifications to them is important. Finally, an exploration of humans' role in the (physical) *landscape* is warranted: the ways that people have modified the dimensions of and spatial relationships among heterogeneous land-cover types (2000: 648-56). These effects may vary along a gradient from areas of dense urban settlement to sparsely-settled rural lands (Blair 1996). Many dynamics of these human-populated systems are still only partially grasped, however. Miller and Hobbs identify a need for more conservation research that explicitly takes human settlement into account (2002).

Thus far, I have proposed 1) that discursive interactions can be seen as essential to community, 2) that communities can be united through a sense of connection to (places

in) a landscape, and 3) that communities interact physically with landscapes through land use. Through these transitively connected arguments, a case can be made for the role of discourse in the landscape. Community discourses, as manifested through social interactions among community members, mediate those community members' perceptions of, movements within, and interactions with the local landscape. If these discursive practices can be better understood, so can the *land use* decisions studied by landscape ecologists. The ways in which meanings actually develop and circulate in local ecological context, however, require further elucidation. Research in several areas, reviewed below, offer insight into aspects of such ecologically-embedded discursive practices.

One relevant body of literature regards languages as repositories of ecological knowledge (Maffi 2001: 8-12). If this line of inquiry is extended to the ways in which language is used in various social contexts, then community discourses, too, can be assessed as sources of information about the local environment. Atran's research suggests how ecological knowledge may be encoded in discourse. He sees the "environmental awareness and behavior" of the Itzaj Maya as reflecting a "distributed *belief system* that may be deemed an *emergent knowledge structure*" (2001: 166). An emergent knowledge structure, he argues, is not intentionally taught or shared among the general population or experts within a group. Rather, it is an orientation to the world that is enabled by one's cultural upbringing. Members of a given group are attuned to certain kinds of relationships in their environment, and are prepared to appreciate them at a certain level of complexity (166-67). If this knowledge structure is pervasive,

unconscious, and not uniquely held by any individual, then I suspect that it is circulated discursively.

Atran's approach brings attention to a key concept for the study of community discourses and narratives: *emergence*. Mayr explains *emergence* as follows: "When two entities are combined at a new level of integration, not all the properties of the new entity are necessarily a logical or predictable consequence of the components" (1988: 34). Similarly, though community discourses and narratives are made manifest only through the communicative acts of community members, it should not be assumed that their properties can be fully explained through the acts of any one community member. These are social phenomena, and can be completely apprehended only at the community scale or higher.

Another pertinent research area explores connections between memory and landscape. Climo and Cattell characterize *social memories* as "images of the world" constructed by social groups "through communication, not private rememberance" (2002: 4). Memory, in other words, can be discursively constructed. Social memories can be attached to "mnemonic sites" in the physical landscape, thus creating "memoryscapes" (17, 21). Viewed in this way, memory can be seen as landscape-scale conservation resource. Indeed, it may be a threatened resource: Climo and Cattell refer to a "memory crisis" of modernity and postmodernity, in which people feel a great interest in the past while at the same time experiencing disconnection with it due to large-scale social changes (6). Conservationists may be able to effectively engage communities by framing their work as the timely protection of local memoryscapes.

For decades, Basso has studied a particular memoryscape: that of the Western Apache. He offers particular insight into the ongoing social process of maintaining a construction of the past in the landscape, which he describes as a *place-world*: "a posited state of affairs, a particular universe of objects and events wherein portions of the past are brought into being" (1996: 6). These place-worlds are continually revisited, appraised, and revised discursively; Basso explains, quoting Camus, that "[s]ense of place is not just something that people know and feel, it is something people do" (6, 109, 143). According to Basso, then, "place-making" is a way of "*doing* human history" (7).

A memoryscape or place-world particularly relevant to rural North Carolina is Allen's concept of the "genealogical landscape." In her study of south central Kentucky, Allen detected a "distinctively regional conversational pattern" in which "sense of place is inseparable from a sense of the network of relations, past and present, that bind people in a neighborhood together" (1990: 152, 161). Community members encounter place by negotiating the web of family ties among people who live in the area, as well as the ties that connect families to particular physical sites—"homeplaces" (156). Someone's "place" in this context can refer both to a geographical location and to a position within the local social network. Awareness of this network is projected backward through time to include the ancestors of living community members—thus becoming a *genealogical* landscape (156). Importantly, Allen sees this approach to place as representing not only particular subject matter but also a distinctive way of speaking—in other words, it is a discourse with a distinctive metacommunicative character. A comparable genealogical landscape is invoked by Sheila Kaye Adams (1995), a writer whose stories recall people and places from her home community in mountainous Madison County, NC. Many

interviewees in my study communities have also given voice to this perspective; conservationists would do well to incorporate it into their rhetorical strategies.

In her study of foxhunting in the New Jersey Pine Barrens, Hufford also identifies ways in which members of a community discursively position themselves in the physical and social landscape. She describes a distinct discursive location in which foxchases are discussed, which she dubs the "Chaseworld." In terms reminiscent of Rappaport's community narratives, she characterizes foxhunts as "'stories' that people tell themselves about themselves" (1992: 6). Both storytelling and foxhunting itself are ways of entering the Chaseworld, an "enclave" that is enclosed within everyday life but has its own landmarks and systems of meaning (8).

All of these cases demonstrate how prolonged participation in locally-specific discursive practices enable community members to "read" the landscape—and interact with it—in ways that outsiders may not be able to readily penetrate. Puckett addresses this issue through her study of local discourse in a rural, eastern Kentucky community. Like Allen, she describes how the concept of "place" is used to locate speakers not only in relation to the landscape, but also within a network of social relationships. The "place" of an ethnographer or activist is taken into account as well, posing formidable challenges for these outsiders as they attempt to work with community members (Puckett 2000: 58-60). Strategies for attempting to enter community discourses as an outsider are taken up in section 1.5.

1.4.4. Understanding ecological discourse: positivism and constructivism revisited

Community ecological discourses, as presented here, challenges the dichotomy between objective and subjective views of reality: they are socially constructed, yet they can have potent, empirically observable effects on biophysical landscapes. Should the study of discourse as an ecological phenomenon aspire, then, to the ideals of positivist inquiry—e.g. generalizability, repeatability, systematic rigor—or those of constructivist inquiry—e.g. reflexivity, authenticity, particularity (Patton 2002: 544)? Elements of both may be appropriate.

Since discourse is a product of human subjectivity, I maintain that a discourse researcher must remain attentive to the perspectives of everyone involved in a study—including her own. Every group of people is unique, and so are the inter-subjective realities they construct through interaction with each other. Thoroughgoing analysis must explore the particularities of each such reality.

At the same time, I do not believe that each discursive context is so irreducibly subjective as to defy any comparison with other contexts. Discourse research, then, can benefit from the employment of uniform methods in different settings, thereby enabling qualitative or quantitative comparison across cases (e.g. multiple case narrative or case survey approaches, respectively [Shkedi 2005]). Comparability can increase the generalizability of findings.

Moreover, if discursive practices have material consequences, I argue that it is appropriate to study discourse in relation to, and across, biophysical landscapes. From a historical ecology perspective, discursive practices, like any socio-cultural phenomena, can be understood as dialectically interrelated with biophysical phenomena—a dialectic

inscribed in landscapes (Crumley 1994). Discourses should be compared, then, not only across social space, but across physical distances and landscape variations. This approach requires constructivist-positivist hybridity that is both ontological and epistemological: accommodating not only competing ways of studying reality, but competing conceptions of the reality that is to be studied.

1.5. Research in action: a discursive approach to community-based natural resource management

1.5.1. Reconciling basic and action research: rigor and relevance

The foregoing reconciliation of constructivist and positivist approaches to studying human-environment interactions remained couched within the language of "basic" research, in which the sole purpose of research, and the criterion for evaluating its success, is assumed to be the advancement of knowledge. However, research can also be designed to meet what Patton calls "critical change criteria:" building "the capacity of those involved to take action," typically by exposing latent structures or power dynamics that have impeded such action (2002: 544). This is the second theoretical tension that I raised in Section 1.3—the tension between basic and action research paradigms.

Argyris and Schön have argued that action research necessarily sacrifices "rigor" for "relevance:" in order to serve communities' needs, researchers must make methodological sacrifices (1991: 85-86). This supposed trade-off is based on an assumption of methodological rigor defined within the basic research paradigm, in which any accommodation of community goals constitutes a deviation from the primary knowledge-seeking mission of the research enterprise. By contrast, from an action

research standpoint, participant empowerment is integral to successful research. From this perspective, the dichotomy between rigor and relevance proves false; indeed, I submit that action research should be judged on *the rigor with which it pursues relevance.* If action research must be relevant to participating communities in order to succeed, then achieving relevance can be viewed as a methodological goal in its own right, with attendant criteria for success.

Relevance is a particularly appropriate benchmark for the study of community ecological discourse: a researcher can measure her success in characterizing a community's discourse by ascertaining whether community members view those characterizations as relevant. Action research solicits this input by involving local participants in the research process. Basic research questions can be answered in the course of helping to achieve community goals. I argue that this approach is not only the most ethical, but in many cases also the most effective, approach to studying discourse at the community scale.

In this section, I consider how action research on community ecological discourse can support community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). I introduce the CBNRM movement, describe some of the unresolved issues it faces, and suggest how a discursive approach can help to address those issues.

1.5.2. Issues in community-based conservation

Community-based approaches to natural resource management (including the associated concepts of *community-based conservation* [CBC], *community-based environmental management* [CBEM], and *community forestry*) have emerged since the 1970s in response to perceived problems with "large-scale, capital-intensive, and

centrally planned conservation and development projects" (Kellert et al. 2000: 706). The case for entrusting resource management to communities was "based on several premises: that local populations have a greater interest in the sustainable use of resources than does the state or distant corporate managers, that local communities are more cognizant of the intricacies of local ecological processes and practices, and that communities are more able to effectively manage those resources through local or traditional forms of access" (Tsing, Brosius, and Zerner 2005: 1). Under the CBNRM model, the goal of "conservation and effective resource management" did not oppose "the search for social justice for historically marginalized peoples;" instead, the two imperatives were inextricably linked (2).

Abetted by growing disillusionment with autocratic government programs, establishment of democratic political structures, and recognition of indigenous resource claims, CBNRM rapidly achieved prominence in international conservation and development arenas: (Agrawal and Gibson 2001). In Murphree's terms, "the old narrative of 'fortress conservation' was largely displaced by the counter-narrative of development through community conservation and sustainable use" (2002: 2). As it has risen to prominence, however, this counter-narrative has shown signs of being just as rigid as the narrative it arose to challenge, becoming a new orthodoxy that may overemphasize communities' role in conservation rather than underemphasizing it (McCarthy 2002, Neumann 2005).

Recent years have seen a backlash against community-based conservation,[5] with scholars from a variety of fields accusing the movement of failing to successfully achieve

[5] I use *community-based conservation*, rather than *community-based natural resource management*, here because it is this term that has been the subject of most debate. In my own work, I prefer the latter label,

either conservation or socioeconomic objectives. A resurgent protectionist movement has called for a renewed emphasis on establishing large protected areas with stronger boundaries (Terborgh 1999, Brosius and Russell 2003, Wilhusen et al. 2002). I see both the shortcomings of CBC and attacks upon it as reflecting a failure to explore how the concept of *conservation* is being discursively constructed and how conservation strategies should vary across cultural contexts.

What is *conservation* in the CBC context, and what should it be? What are appropriate conservation goals for a community-based project, are they the same as those of other conservation projects, and are they the same in every location? There is clearly no consensus in answering these questions. CBC has been taken to task in many cases for failing to achieve such conservation goals as protecting biodiversity and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources (Kellert et al. 2000, Redford and Sanderson 2000, Terborgh 2000). Some critics simply blame this failure on poor implementation of CBC; others maintain that the very idea is conceptually flawed. Conservation and development are incompatible objectives, according to this view, so neither is well achieved when they are combined (Kramer and van Schaik 1997).

What such criticisms leave unclear is whose definition of "conservation" is being used. The CBC movement, however, is vulnerable to such attacks because it has not arrived at a consistent definition either (see Kellert et al. 2000). Berkes observes that "our definitions of conservation have perhaps been too simplistic and too Western"

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since I have found *natural resource management* to carry fewer divisive connotations than *conservation*. The concept of *management* can also be problematic, however, as discussed below.

(2004: 628).[6] Natural scientists have often displayed an inclination to implicitly assume that conservation goals are absolute and will (or should) be the same in both a wilderness preserve and a community management area. However, if community participation in a conservation project is seen as a central goal in its own right, rather than simply politically-expedient tokenism, it is reasonable to expect community members to participate in the definition and execution of conservation goals (see Arnstein 1969). During the past decade, conservation scientists have become increasingly sensitive to Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), "the knowledge held by indigenous cultures about their immediate environments and the cultural (management) practices that build on that knowledge" (Ford and Martinez 2000: 1249, in their introduction to a special issue of *Ecological Applications* focused on TEK). A growing number of CBC efforts are guided by TEK, though its epistemological reconciliation with Western science is still tenuous at best (Berkes 2004, Kellert et al. 2000).

Given the cultural subjectivity of the *conservation* concept, it may be more productive to gain an understanding of the *process* through which conservation takes place, instead of seeking universal agreement regarding its *goal*. Holt argues that "[c]onservation is not a state of being, but a social process inextricably linked to social and political institutions influencing resource management" (2005: 199). Wilhusen et al. concur, characterizing conservation as dependent on "our collective ability to negotiate

[6] I would substitute "Western" with "based in Western science" because it is too simplistic to assume that everyone in the "West" shares a concept of conservation. This assumption reflects a tendency on the part of academics to equate the values of the Euro-American scientific-intellectual elite with the values of the overall Euro-American populace—an assumption that does not hold up well in rural U.S. communities, for example (see also McCarthy 2002: 1284-85).

legitimate, enforceable agreements" (2002: 18). Processually, then, conservation represents a collective action problem, as I observed in Section 1.2.2.

The study of conservation in terms of institutional decision-making processes has been most fully explicated through common property theory, which approaches community-environment interactions by studying institutions of resource ownership and control (Berkes 2004: 624). Analysis of property regimes enables researchers to understand who the stakeholders in the management of a given resource are, and perhaps who they should be. Of particular concern from a conservation perspective are *common pool resources*, resources that are *subtractable* (diminished for everyone when used by anyone) but not easily *excludable* (protected from use by others) or *divisible* (broken down into smaller units) (Dolšak and Ostrom 2003, Oakerson 1992). Many of these resources lend themselves to management by a local *appropriator organization* (Ostrom 1992: 297) as common property. The common property research literature includes numerous examples of common property arrangements through which groups of users have sustainably managed such resources as fisheries, forest products, pasture land, or irrigation systems (e.g. Acheson and Brewer 2003, McKean 1992, Wade 1992, and Ilahiane 2001, respectively). In many cases, however, such a management regime may not exist in a given area, or it may not be sanctioned by the government. In such cases, successful conservation requires either acknowledgment and support of unofficial community institutions or, in their absence, creation of new ones (Dolšak and Ostrom 2003, Ostrom and Schlager 1996).

If, following common property theory, we regard conservation as the establishment of sustainable resource management institutions, then how should these

institutions be designed? Are communities necessarily the appropriate management unit for such institutions? And how must institutions vary according to cultural context? The CBC movement needs to come up with consistent answers to these three questions, which I address sequentially below.

Advances in ecological theory have problematized prevalent assumptions about conservation reserve design: ecosystems are increasingly being seen as complex and adaptive, characterized by non-equilibrium dynamics across a range of temporal and spatial scales. Landscape patterns are attributed to disturbance regimes that can vary widely in frequency and extent (Baker 1989, Romme 1982, Turner and Romme 1993, Turner et al. 1993). White and Jentsch (2005) argue that this replacement of a "paradigm of balance" with a "paradigm of flux" (as termed by Pickett et al. 1992) has ramifications for management decisions. Rather than seek to preserve a single landscape patch forever in a given state, it may be more appropriate to allow disturbance regimes to continue sustainably throughout an entire multipatch landscape (White and Jentsch 2005). As research in historical ecology reminds us, moreover, most if not all present-day landscapes reflect human influence, so the search for a "natural reference state" to protect may be unrealistic and even unjust (Agrawal and Gibson 1999, Crumley 1994a, White and Jentsch 2005).

Given the flux, nonlinearity, and uncertainty that characterize "social-ecological systems" (Berkes 2004: 623), Neumann concludes that a model of conservation based on fixed enclosures (also exclosures) is both unrealistic and inappropriate. He sees reserve design debates that derive from island biogeography theory as misguided and, following Zimmerer (2000), calls for replacing the "island metaphor" with one of "overlapping

patchworks" (Neumann 2005: 149). He extends this critique to CBC projects that also rely on enclosure by restricting an area to members of a given community, i.e. establishing a common property management regime (147). While I disagree with Neumann's claim that refining the design of fixed reserves and limiting outsiders' access to community resources are never justified, I agree that in many human-dominated and privately-held landscapes such strategies have limited applicability.

Debate over conservation design leads to the second critical question that CBC faces, which concerns social scaling: are communities the appropriate units for managing natural resources? As covered in Section 1.4.3, the concept of *community* is just as controversial as *conservation*, and failure to interrogate it may be just as damaging. As Li notes, constituting community as "a unit of analysis and action" assumes a boundary between communities and "what lies beyond them," such as markets and states—a boundary that may not actually exist (2001: 157). CBC is particularly vulnerable to problems with the community concept because it places so much emphasis there. Like human dimensions research, CBC would benefit from more explicit consideration of *scale*: whether viewed as territorial or social entities, communities always exist within larger societal structures (Berkes 2004: 626, McCarthy 2002: 1287). Realistically, successful management will depend on cross-scale linkages—ideally through an iterative process of institutional learning, which Berkes terms "adaptive comanagement" (2004: 626). Communities may be regarded as an important management unit, but certainly not the only one.

Even if communities represent a meaningful management scale, members of those communities may not be interested in conservation. Conservationists have frequently

portrayed communities as ecologically noble. Labels such as *indigenous* and *traditional* have been used to suggest "intrinsically sustainable resource management regimes" (Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998: 164-65). According to this view, since it is "in the interest of a community to protect its resources, it will" (Agrawal and Gibson 1999: 633). Numerous case studies of historical land use practices have demonstrated that communities are not always ecological despoilers (632). To claim that they are always conservationists, however, is equally unfounded, as Redford and Sanderson persuasively argue:

> Traditional and indigenous people can claim incontrovertible rights to their land. As morally responsible humans we must support their struggle. This responsibility does not mean that as conservationists we must count as conservation everything these people have done and wish to do. As independent peoples with rights to self-determination, their future should be in their own hands—whether that future meets our expectations or not (2000: 1362).

For Redford and Sanderson, this point is polemical; they use it to argue that conservation and community goals should be divorced. The message also holds true, however, for those who would involve communities in conservation: to practice conservation, community members do not have to be living traditional lifestyles in "harmony with nature," untainted by the corrupting influence of "Western" culture (Holt 2005: 201). Indeed, Holt (2005) argues that traditional cultural practices and conservation are inconsistent with one another. She agrees with Kramer and van Schaik that, while "traditional communities" with low population density and "limited technology" may have used resources sustainably, that does not make them "conservationists" (Kramer and van Schaik 1997: 6-7). Following Alvard (1993, 1995), she characterizes the behavior of such communities as "epiphenomenal" conservation, in which users do not deplete a resource because they do not have the means to do so, not

because they are purposefully limiting their use (Holt 2005: 204). As a cultural practice, then, conservation is reflected not only in resource use outcomes, but in the intentions of the users. The conservation movement emerged in the Global North as a response to the realization that natural resources were becoming increasingly scarce. "Traditional communities" that have not encountered resource scarcity have no incentive to establish conservation institutions (Holt 2005).

The global pervasiveness of the "indigenous conservationist" image can actually limit or divert communities' rhetorical strategies: they may seek to recast themselves in this mold to gain the approval of outside conservation agencies. In Northern Thailand, for example, organizations representing tribal minority groups have tried to cast those groups as "indigenous" and "traditional environmentalists" who have "preserved the land they occupied since time immemorial" (Lohmann 1999). In many cases, however, these tribes have not lived in the region longer than the majority Northern Thai population, so their "indigenous" status is dubious; moreover, such a claim makes them vulnerable to criticism if they adopt new technologies or otherwise deviate from their "traditional" lifestyle (Lohmann 1999; Li 2005 presents a comparable Phillipines case). Through this attempt to gain legitimacy, which Lohmann (1999) calls "self-Orientalizing" and "self-objectivizing," these communities have ended up jeopardizing their standing; they would have been better served by simply emphasizing their rights of agency and self-determination. This is what Holt calls a "conservation Catch-22:" the very process of market integration, cultural change, and attendant resource depletion that creates the incentives for a community members to conserve strips those community members of their "natural conservationist" status (2005: 201, 203). As Li (2005) observes,

"community-based" conservation efforts that seek to empower communities through the imposition of external labels and agendas, such as those associated with indigeneity and subsistence livelihood, may actually end up further marginalizing those communities.

McCarthy and Neumann offer a more insidious explanation for the ascription of conservation inclinations to communities: they see CBC movements as serving the interests of neoliberal elites. Neumann recounts how the local control agenda articulated by neo-Marxist, left-wing intellectuals in the 1970s was effectively co-opted by neoliberal interests in the 1980s, since it was consistent with their goal of transferring authority from the state to civil society and the market (2005: 85-86). McCarthy describes community forestry as a hybrid of neoliberalism and evolving trends in forest management. He cites the George W. Bush administration's apparent enthusiasm for community-based conservation approaches as evidence of this hybridity (McCarthy 2005a; see also the EPA's Web site on Community Based Environmental Protection [US EPA 2005]).

The preceding critiques discredit any notion that communities are inherently suitable management units for conservation; if CBC initiatives predicate their value on the alleged innate virtues of communities, they will be on shaky theoretical ground. At the same time, there is no reason to assume that "non-traditional" communities have been corrupted and are morally unfit to undertake conservation. This observation brings us to the third critical question: how must CBC approaches be adapted for different cultural contexts, including those that are decidedly "non-traditional"?

As may be evident from the discussion thus far, CBC approaches and the accompanying debate have largely evolved around cases in the Global South (though

most of the intellectuals involved in the debate are based in the Global North). This Global South emphasis is reflected in many of the debate's preoccupations: indigeneity, traditional ecological knowledge, and "development" are prominent examples. How, then, does CBC work in a Global North setting like North Carolina—a place "within the heart of late capitalist modernity, not at some liminal or transitional juncture" (McCarthy 2002: 1283)? How does it translate to communities that are not indigenous, may or may not retain significant "TEK," and are already thoroughly "developed"?[7]

At the present postcolonial juncture in conservation discourse, theoretical and methodological insights from the Global South are finally beginning to be regarded as instructive for Global North conservationists. Having explored communities' roles in natural resource management with conservation practitioners and community members in both Thailand and the United States, I have been impressed repeatedly by how much more sophisticated the debate has been in the former location than in the latter. A growing number of scholars have also noticed this discrepancy; they are calling for historically Global South concerns to be raised in the Global North and for theory to transcend these dualities (e.g. McCarthy 2005b: 953, Neumann 2005: 114-17). As community-based conservation practice expands in the North, so is the literature on the subject. However, I see a need to more critically and explicitly ask whether the assumptions of Southern CBC map well onto U.S. communities, or whether different considerations should be taken into account.

[7] I am using the designation "developed" here in a global sense: communities that are considered to be in the "developed world." This does not mean that profound shortcomings do not exist in the economic and democratic institutions of Global North communities. Indeed, I believe that such shortcomings do characterize rural North Carolina, as I discuss in the conclusion of Chapter Five.

The similarities or differences between Global Southern and Northern CBC come down to the communities themselves: the people who are or would be involved in conservation initiatives. In examining academic portrayals of rural actors in the North and South, McCarthy notes an assumed difference in motivation. Southern communities are characterized as marginal, disenfranchised groups trying to defend their local culture against the onslaught of global capitalism. Rural U.S. communities, on the other hand, are often seen as part of that capitalist machinery: self-interested, rational actors seeking control of resources for economic accumulation or aesthetic enjoyment (2002). In short, rural U.S. residents may not be regarded as appropriate CBC participants because they are not deemed to need greater "empowerment."

Given the emphasis on social justice within the field, therefore, many researchers and advocates of community-based natural resource management approaches have turned their attention to "marginal" and/or indigenous populations within the United States. Rural whites, who are (on average) the least economically disadvantaged rural population in the U.S. (Jensen, McLaughlin, and Slack 2003), have enjoyed a less-favored status within the movement. As McCarthy puts it, few white claims to natural resources could be traced back "more than a few generations before finding bloody acts of capitalist appropriation at their foundations" (2002: 1283). Moreover, the generally conservative political leanings of this population are often anathema to "the political and theoretical sympathies of academics, leftists, and environmentalists" (McCarthy 2002: 1282; see also Bidwell Pearce 2003).

Should rural whites in the U.S. be included, then, in CBC projects? I believe that they should, for two reasons. First, closer examination of rural communities reveals

patterns of marginalization and disempowerment not simply determined by ethnicity or economic status. Contrary to the myth of global, homogenizing capitalist modernity, local and regional cultural diversity persists in the United States. In many rural areas of the country, it is telling that residents "believe themselves to be marginal" (McCarthy 2002: 1285). Despite an apparent lack of systemic obstacles to their participation, many rural whites in communities where I have worked do not believe that they can be or should be part of resource management decisions. As a result, they are disempowered in a real sense with regard to these decisions and could benefit from CBC approaches.

The second reason that many rural whites and other rural residents should be involved in CBC is pragmatic: they control many of the natural resources being targeted for conservation. As Neumann points out, property ownership is, to a large extent, the underlying determinant of lasting CBC outcomes (2005). From a practical standpoint, this circumstance renders moot the foregoing theoretical debate about the appropriate conservation role for communities: if a community controls the natural resources in a given location, management agents must work with that community to conserve those resources, whether or not the agents wish to see the community empowered.

The CBC debate has frequently centered around "people in parks," i.e. whether or not to permit community management in areas of government preserves (see Schwartzman, Moreira, and Nepstad and responses, Conservation Forum, *Conservation Biology*, Oct. 2000). Resources are owned by the state, and CBC involves ceding either resource extraction or property rights to local groups (Schwartzman, Moreira, and Nepstad 2000; Neumann 2005). Much of the research on community-based resource management in the United States has retained this focus on common management of

public lands. According to Richard Knight, however, much of this nation's natural heritage lies on private lands, making them worthy of greater attention within conservation circles (1999).

CBC on private lands in the United States faces a particular challenge: it must contend with a well-established and legally-enshrined private property regime. Private property rights have been an obsession and a topic of intense debate in the U.S. since European settlement and national independence, and they have enjoyed a resurgence in recent decades in the form of Property Rights and Wise Use movements (Freyfogle 2003, McCarthy 2002). In much of the rural U.S., individual local residents, rather than state bureaucracies or outside elites, own or control resources. Though their property rights exist only through government support, many landowners accept the prevalent Lockean view of private property as "natural," to be protected but not infringed by government (Freyfogle 2003: 4). In attempting to establish community management regimes for common pool resources, then, CBC initiatives must redistribute rights to the community from the many individuals that compose it, not from a few centralized institutional actors. This task is daunting, but in many cases—given the power over resource use that rests at the community level—it may represent the only way to implement conservation practices.

"Property ownership" in the aforementioned sense is not the only claim on natural resources that must be taken into account, moreover. Common property studies reveal that, just as there are many kinds of shared resources, so there are many ways in which the rights to control or use those resources are apportioned (Ostrom and Schlager 1996). Resource management agents should consider the full range of rights and benefits that

various "appropriators" enjoy or expect with regard to a given resource; all of these individuals/groups may merit inclusion as stakeholders in management decision-making process. "Management," in other words, should not just serve the interests of managerial classes within a society; conservation initiatives that fail to interrogate local power inequities may unwittingly reinforce those inequities. An expanded conception of *stakeholders* can help to avoid this outcome. At the same time, agents who appear to challenge the status quo risk alienating the very property owners whose cooperation is crucial. Gaining the trust of all parties is a delicate balancing act.

As the points raised here suggest, ownership of, control over, and access to natural resources are frequently complex. Whatever stance resource management agents take regarding local management regimes, they should not ignore them: these institutions are likely to play a decisive role in the success or failure of management initiatives. Conceptions of property relations vary among cultural contexts, so agents' strategies will need to be modified accordingly.

I have identified four areas of inconsistency—regarding conceptions of conservation, design of management institutions, the appropriateness of communities as management units, and differences among cultural/institutional contexts—that the CBC movement must face. These ongoing issues all point to the need for management agents to understand perspectives of community members in the particular location where they are working. Following from the four concerns that I have advanced, I see four clusters of questions that leaders of community-based natural resource management initiatives should strive to answer:

1. How do the people who inhabit this landscape understand and describe that landscape and its resources? How do they articulate their relationship to it and its value to them? What would conserving or successfully managing that landscape mean to them?
2. How should this initiative be designed and scaled to reflect the interpenetrating patterns and process of the biophysical and socio-cultural landscapes?
3. How do local residents perceive each other; how do they conceive of *community*? Who, then, is the community with regard to a given place or resource? Do the members of this community favor "conservation," as they understand it? Why or why not? Are there certain subgroups, contexts, or conversations within which conservation sentiment is especially evident or latent?
4. How does this community's reception of conservation reflect the broader cultural context in which it is situated? How do people here understand their rights to the landscape's resources? What roles do the individual, the community, and the state have in their concept of property? What processes are deemed appropriate ways to negotiate the allocation of property rights? What institutions provide a forum for this negotiation, or what institutions could be established to do so?

Community-based conservation has not developed consistent ways of addressing such questions. Like the "fortress conservation" it arose to challenge, CBC has come to be regarded as a generic model that can be applied in much the same way anywhere (Neumann 2005: 147). To be effective, however, CBC/CBNRM must be sensitive to the unique ecological-cultural context of each particular initiative. A discursive approach can engender this sensitivity by engaging community members in articulating a locally-

relevant vision of natural resource management that can motivate collective action. The elements of this approach are described below.

1.5.3. Engaging local ecological discourse through ethnographic dialogue

As noted in Section 1.4.3, discourse takes place in community context as an *event*. Not yet "fixed" in a text for analysis, it is expressed through ""*vis-à-vis* encounter:" *dialogue* (Ricoeur 1981: 139, 145). When working in a community, a researcher enters into these dialogic encounters, and they become the object of his analysis. This ethnographic dialogue is central to the study of community ecological discourse and the pursuit of discursive CBNRM.

Ethnography has characteristically been described as "the collection of data that describe a culture" (Bernard 1995: 16). Such data collection generally, though not necessarily, consists of field research conducted among the people being studied (Bernard 1995). Participatory observation and interviewing are hallmark techniques of this approach, which is strongly, though not uniquely, associated with anthropology (Bernard 2002; Brosius and Russell 2003). Ethnographic fieldwork rests on the premise that, in order to understand "the nature or intentions of other humans," a researcher needs to spend time with them (Mintz 2000: 170). The time-intensity of ethnography, though often deterrent in resource management circles, can yield incomparably nuanced insights into a community (Brosius and Russell 2003).

Ethnography is praised by Schiffrin as the "most encompassing" approach to the study of discourse, because it situates discourse within a specific cultural context and recognizes contextual effects on communication (Schiffrin 1994: 137, see also Hymes 1974: 3-4). Ethnography can focus on *community* itself, or on *institutions*, but I see

discourse as a particularly important topic for ethnography in the service of natural resource management: understanding local ecological discourses can enable management agents to better engage with communities and institutions, because they will gain some appreciation of what those communities and institutions mean to those who participate in them.

The way in which discourse is encountered through ethnographic dialogue bears closer examination. For Bahktin, language exists through dialogue. His view, as summarized by Holquist, is that language must be understood in terms of "two actual people talking to each other in a specific dialogue at a particular time in a particular place…. [E]ach of the two persons would be a consciousness at a specific point in the history of defining itself through the choice it has made—out of all the possible existing languages available to it at that moment—of a discourse to transcribe its intention *in this specific exchange*" (1981: xx). According to this view, all speakers are respondents: all utterances relate to all the previous utterances in a speaker's discursive universe (Bahktin 1999). Mannheim and Tedlock advance the related proposition that "any given speaker at any given moment is immediately an actor within a social and cultural world that is always in process" (1995).

If a researcher is going to enter into these dialogues, she must learn how to do so in a culturally competent manner. This entails continually reassessing her own social position within the community, and thereby understanding the ways and contexts in which she could successfully address a given topic with a given informant. Briggs terms this process of learning culturally-appropriate ways of speaking and interacting as gaining "metacommunicative competence" (1986: 61-62). Saville-Troike agrees that this

is the only way to gain an appreciation of the "subtle interconnections of meaning" in community discourse (1997: 128).

Through the ethnographic interview, a researcher purposefully inserts himself into the dialogue. Some advocates of ethnographic discourse research favor observation over interviewing (at least initially), maintaining that the goal is to learn about discourse as it occurs among community members, so the researcher should stay on the sidelines (Bernard 2002, Briggs 1986). I see interviewing as an appropriate strategy for environmental research, however, for two reasons. First, the presence of an outside researcher, whether she is an observer or an interviewer, will affect the discourse, so it is better to explicitly address this than to mask it. Second, since any conservation initiative with outsider participation will inevitably constitute a discursive intervention, it is appropriate for researchers in this field to intervene themselves in order to gauge community response. There may be no equally effective and efficient way to raise ecological/resource management questions in a community.

Using an approach that brings Foucault's concept of discourse together with a Bahktinian dialogic approach, Sawin argues that the ethnographic interview can be used to successfully shed light on community discourses. She sees the interview as an inter-subjective encounter, wherein both interviewer and interviewee enact themselves and their speech in response to the particular context of the interview and their understanding of the expectations involved. An interview, then, is a unique speech event that will never reproduce "natural" everyday conversation. From a dialogic perspective, however, this is not a problem: recognized for what it is, an interview can still offer insight into the discursive resources available to speakers in a given speech community (2004). The

interviewer witnesses how the interviewee "positions herself relative to internalized societal discourses" (7). As more interviews are conducted, I would add, emergent discourses come more clearly into view.

Through ethnographic dialogue, then, a discourse researcher can begin to learn not only *what* something means but *how* it means: how meanings are established and circulated in the community (Fiske 1989: 14, Foucault 1977: 199). This "critical perspective," according to Brosius and Russell, can allow resource management agents to "understand not only the human impact on the physical and biotic environment, but also how that environment is constructed, represented, claimed, and contested" (2003: 48). They predict that the resulting "forms of conservation practice" will be "both more inclusive and more effective" (49). This claim can be tested by using ethnographic research to inform the development of collective resource management initiatives.

1.5.4. Mobilizing community discourse: participatory approaches

Building on ethnographic insights into local discourses, resource management agents and community members should be better positioned to jointly formulate resource management strategies that are meaningful to all parties. According to Gaventa, participatory research "attempts to break down the distinction between the researchers and the researched, the subjects and objects of knowledge production, by the participation of the people-for-themselves in the process of gaining and creating knowledge. In the process, research is seen not only as a process of creating knowledge, but, simultaneously, as education and development of consciousness, and of mobilization for action" (1988: 19). Similarly, "participatory communication," in Freire's terms, should be conceived as a "dialogic encounter" through which all parties can "unveil reality for

themselves" (Thomas 1994: 51). A participatory approach to discursive CBNRM, then, should empower community members to take part in identifying relevant ecological discourses and narratives and then mobilizing them. This process can help build a community's capacity for collective response to environmental threats.

Basing community empowerment on the engagement of local discourses is not without risks, however. Mayo (2000) warns that political movements which seek to mobilize communities through appeals to "culture" risk dangerous oversimplification. Care must be taken to ensure that all members of the "community" actually feel represented in the discursive framing of the movement.

At the same time, the peril for conservationists of excluding local communities from discourse mobilization is well-documented. Weaver (1996), in his study of the rhetoric surrounding the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, recounts how environmental discourses were used to consciously marginalize and vilify local communities. Rather than being invited to join in the discursive establishment of meanings for the new preserve, residents of the region were silenced, paving the way for their eventual ouster from the landscape. While they achieved an ostensible conservation victory, Weaver sees park campaign leaders as forever sullying their moral legitimacy through this abuse of discursive power. Establishment of the park engendered a lasting resentment on the part of many Southern Appalachian highlanders—a resentment that I have witnessed firsthand in Macon County. The tradition of environmental campaigns that seek to rhetorically excise communities from the landscape continues worldwide to this day, and these campaigns continue to draw blistering criticism from human rights advocates: Pinkaew and Lohmann, for example, excoriate environmental interests for

pushing the removal of tribal peoples from parks in Northern Thailand (Pinkaew 1999, Lohmann 1999).

Resource management agents should try to avoid the pitfalls of oversimplification and exclusion through respectful attention to discourses of those with whom they work. Harper et al. demonstrate how this philosophy can be put into practice: their approach to participatory research focuses specifically on community's shared narratives. Through a combination of ethnographic techniques, researchers sought to understand the "multidimensional web" of narratives that explain the world and motivate action among community members (2004: 215). Equipped with this understanding, they could then work with community members "to uncover, create, and sustain narratives for meaning, identity, and personal and social change" (201). If need be, they could also "assist in the cocreation of new narratives" (201). In DeLuca's terms, this is the process of "rearticulating" discursive elements (1999: 37-38, 40).

Harper et al.'s work points the way toward the development of community-based methodologies that rely upon discursive practices. A research/conservation initiative will inevitably alter the discursive landscape of a community, so it is advisable to recognize that a *discursive intervention* is taking place and ensure sensitivity to all the perspectives involved. Ideally, the discursive articulations that emerge from such a process will be "multivocal" (McDowell 1996: 372), representing the contributions of everyone involved. Indeed, the goal should be to foster and sustain *more* inclusive articulations than those that were previously in circulation. In this way, research that seeks to characterize the ecological discourse of a community can also enhance the rhetorical resources for collective action in that community.

1.5.5. Negotiating conservation and community agendas

Empowering each community to formulate its own locally-relevant resource management vision may suit conservation advocates too—as long as those visions are ecologically sustainable. However, the question raised in Section 1.5.2 remains: what if a community does not want to conserve its resources? If community members are bent on despoiling their environment for short-term profit, conservationists would understandably object to helping them achieve that goal.

Avoidance of these potential conflicts should be anticipated in the research questions that guide a participatory project. Recall the two questions that I introduced in Section 1.1: 1) *How do residents of rural North Carolina discursively construct their relationships with the environment, and how do these discursive constructions vary within and among communities?*

and 2) *If framed through local ecological discourse, can rationales for collective natural resource management attract broader public support and involvement, thereby potentially enhancing communities' capacity to protect valued environmental assets?*

While the first question is strictly exploratory, the second includes an explicit agenda: "enhancing communities' capacity to protect valued environmental assets." By specifying the type of collective action that the research is intended to help motivate, I am making it clear that I am seeking to identify discursive resources for conservation. This stipulation prevented me from having to facilitate community actions that were not conservation-oriented.

Analyzing discourse in support of conservation action does not mean ignoring the views of community members who oppose such action, however; doing so would hurt the

credibility of the research in the community, rather than helping it. When a researcher encounters narratives that reflect an antagonistic or pessimistic perspective on collective action, those should also be acknowledged when presenting findings. Community audiences can thus be exposed to antagonisms within the local discourse, leaving them to decide whether the case for conservation is persuasive or not. An action research approach means that researchers and resource management agents must subject their agendas to public scrutiny, but those agendas do not need to be denied. Rather than simply assessing existing conservation sentiments in a community, this research model effectively draws upon those sentiments to propose a new conservation movement, and then gauges community members' responses to the proposal.

Whether or not it is used to advance conservation, action research contains another, more fundamental assumption: that collective action itself is desirable. Building community capacity means increasing community members' collective ability to determine their fate. It is possible that this might not always be an appropriate goal. Some community members may oppose collective action, because they prefer individual freedom. If most members of a community feel this way, then encouraging collective action may be inappropriate or unfeasible. Alternately, a project team may determine that increasing community capacity will not help it carry out its agenda. If the team wants to protect a particular natural resource, for example, and the majority of community members want to deplete that resource, then increasing the community's agency would not be in the team's interest.

Deciding *not* to help empower a community, of course, is intensely problematic—such a path should not be taken lightly. As discussed in Section 1.5.4, the history of

natural resource conservation is rife with the abuse of such decisions—occasions when conservationists unfairly excluded local communities from the decision-making process, thus causing immeasurable damage both to the communities' well being and to the reputation of the conservation movement. Less thoroughly examined, however, are the potential problems with giving communities unquestioned authority over resource management decisions. A community's perceived self-interest may sometimes conflict with the interests of others: if particular local communities are unquestioningly privileged as management bodies, then people and ecosystems at other scales can suffer (Berkes 2004). Moreover, CBNRM advocates have tended to prefer the agendas of some communities over others—preferences that have not been fully interrogated (McCarthy 2002).

In short, I do not believe that community capacity-building enjoys automatic moral justification as a research or resource management approach; I do believe, however, that it is likely to be the most successful approach in many cases. Involving communities in the management of the landscapes where they live and work can be challenging in the short term, but it may prove essential in the long term. If employed in appropriate settings, the research model describe here offers a way of making the resource management planning process more rewarding for community members and management agents alike.

1.6. Conclusion and outline of subsequent chapters

In this chapter, I have identified a need for a more ecological approach to studying human valuation of the environment—an approach that considers the

multiscalar discursive practices through which ecological values are circulated within and across communities and landscapes. This interdisciplinary exploration of *community ecological discourse* can bridge constructivist and positivist research paradigms by considering the role of human subjectivity within biophysical ecosystems. Such an approach is needed, I argue, to improve natural resource management agents' effectiveness in helping rural communities respond to rapid landscape change. Indeed, perhaps the most appropriate way to gain understanding of ecological discourses is to involve community members directly in cocreating narratives that support collective natural resource management. Through this participatory process, researchers can achieve their basic research goals while also satisfying the action research mandate to promote community empowerment. I see participatory discourse research, based on ethnographic fieldwork, as critical in developing locally-relevant CBNRM initiatives.

In Chapter Two, I introduce an *iterative, participatory research model* (IPRM) for studying community ecological discourses. This model conceives community members and researchers as equal partners in identifying local discursive resources for collective natural resource management action. Through documentary ethnography, public meetings, and evaluative instruments, project participants refine narratives that can be used to motive locally-relevant CBNRM initiatives. In this way, the research process can aid both community members and resource management agents in addressing rapid landscape change.

In chapters Three and Four, I will describe the results of two participatory research projects through which I investigated community ecological discourses in rural North Carolina: *Perspectives on Land* (POL) in the Piedmont region of the state and

Little Tennessee Perspectives (LTP) in the Mountain region. These projects were not fully-realized applications of IPRM; rather, they serve to gauge its potential efficacy. POL and LTP represent a progressively refined ethnographic effort to "uncover, create, and sustain" narratives that could contribute to a locally meaningful conservation ethic in each participating community. Through analyzing the process undertaken and data gathered, I characterize ecological discursive practices as they vary within and among rural communities in two North Carolina regions.

In Chapter Five, I evaluate POL and LTP by assessing the demonstrated and potential relevance of the ecological narratives articulated by project participants. I first investigate whether project narratives were locally resonant enough to motivate new forms of collective action in the project communities. Then I test support for the narratives among community members at large, in order to assess those narratives' potential to build support for further collective natural resource management initiatives. Reflecting on the evaluation findings, I consider this research model's prospects for enhancing the capacity of rural community members and resource management agents to collaboratively achieve mutually desirable landscape futures.

Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY: DEVELOPING A DISCURSIVE RESEARCH MODEL FOR COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

2.1. Building communities' capacity to address landscape change

In the previous chapter, I critiqued prevailing approaches to natural resource management for largely failing to effectively involve communities in conversations about the future of their landscapes. This deficiency, I proposed, could be corrected through a better understanding of the ecological discourses through which community members construct their local environments. These discourses constitute the "interpretive repertoire" (Potter and Wetherell 1987, in Colombo and Senatore 2005: 52) upon which individuals draw when making land use decisions. Resource management agents—including community activists, representatives of non-profit conservation organizations, and government agency personnel—can benefit from drawing upon this locally available repertoire when attempting to build a community's capacity to address landscape change.

In this chapter, I will introduce a participatory research model that has potential to bring community ecological discourses to bear on resource management initiatives. The model has been developed through research that I have conducted with community partners in five rural North Carolina communities, first through the *Perspectives on Land*

(POL) project and then through the *Little Tennessee Perspectives* (LTP) project. I will describe how each component of the model evolved over the course of this fieldwork.

2.2. An iterative participatory research model

The research model that I propose here represents an attempt to satisfy constructivist, positivist, and critical change criteria. It draws upon constructivist and positivist approaches in seeking to understand community ecological discourses. The reason for gaining this understanding is to foster critical change and helping to build community capacity by drawing upon resources for collective action within those discourses. The measure of success in this endeavor is relevance: the extent to which research findings are perceived as rhetorically credible within the community.

Figure 2.1 diagrams the research model, as developed and refined over the course of the POL and LTP projects (Cumming and Norwood in preparation). This model heeds Berkes' (2004) admonition that community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) should be informed by principles of adaptive management. It is highly unlikely that a CBNRM project initiated by outside agents or a few concerned citizens will immediately achieve optimal relevance to the broader community it aims to serve. Therefore, the project should be able to "learn" from (i.e. *adapt* to) its environment. The proposed *iterative participatory research model* (IPRM) represents a way of pursuing and assessing relevance through methodological iterations between community input and analysis.

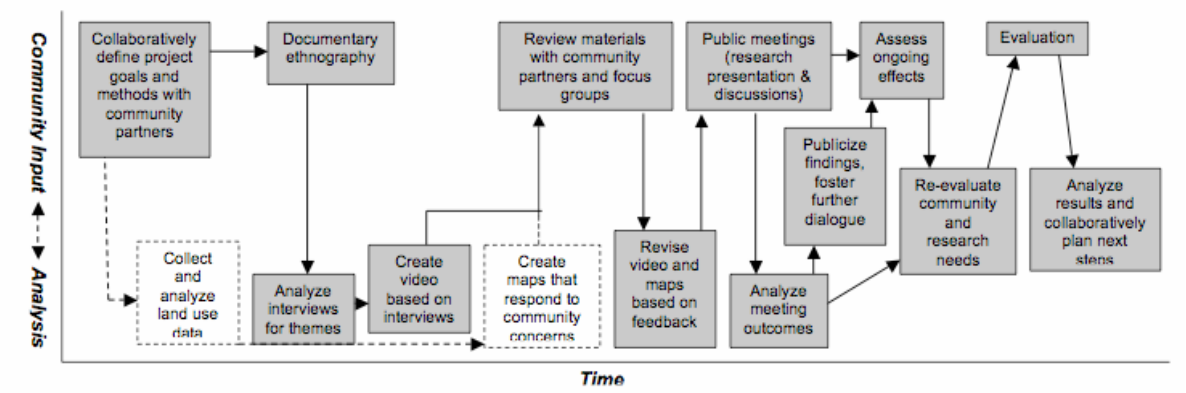


Figure 2.1. An iterative, participatory research model for community-based natural resource management. The solid-line elements are included in my own research; the dotted-line elements represent intersecting research conducted by Carla Norwood. Model developed with Carla Norwood (Cumming and Norwood in preparation). A version of this diagram also appears in Cumming, Guffey, and Norwood (book chapter in preparation).

If a project's validity is based in its relevance to a given community, then the members of that community are the jury that must ultimately assess that validity. To play this role, they need to be involved in the research process. IPRM exposes each stage of analysis to community critique, which can then inform subsequent analyses.

The approach represented by IPRM can be seen as a kind of ecological modeling (Jackson, Trebitz, and Cottingham 2000). As with any systems research model, the goal here is to represent complex phenomena accurately enough to understand, predict, and/or intervene in those phenomena. The model cannot and need not reproduce the full complexity of the system being described; rather, it should incorporate the key parameters needed to effectively explain the structures and processes being studied. The accuracy of the model can be evaluated by comparing it to a data set that was not used to construct it—a process known as model *validation* or *corroboration*.[8] Discrepancies can be used to inform subsequent model refinements (Turner, Gardner, and O'Neill 2001).

[8] Turner, Gardner, and O'Neill (2001) prefer the term *corroboration* to *validation* because it does not misleadingly imply that a model can be "true."

Each analysis stage of IPRM produces, in a sense, a model that attempts to approximately reflect certain discursive practices of a community. Community input serves to corroborate this approximation by gauging its relevance to community members, thereby enabling a refined approximation. Through multiple iterations, the goal is to arrive at an approximation that is relevant enough to effectively explain the discursive practices under scrutiny and thereby help motivate desired community action.

While the phenomena I am investigating are discursive, the underlying logic of IPRM is not confined to the study of discourse. Carla Norwood's research uses the model to inform the development and presentation of landscape change data.

Lest the term be misleading, I want to clarify the sense in which *community input* is used in IPRM before proceeding further. I do not intend community input to connote a role for community members that is unidirectional or merely consultative. Community members are not asked to respond passively to a set of predefined research questions or hypotheses; instead, their views and concerns can and should direct the course of the entire research endeavor. Community members and researchers co-create the project through engaging in an extended dialogue, which can be transformative for all involved. Moreover, the roles of *community member* and *researcher* are not necessarily dichotomous; community members can and should be research agents themselves (see Suarez-Balcazar et al. 2004, Gaventa 1988).

The roles of community members and researchers will be elaborated further in subsequent sections, wherein I draw upon my own fieldwork to discuss each component of IPRM.

2.3. Initiating participatory research: the role of community partners

The most crucial phase of community input in POL/LTP began before the projects even existed *per se*: the establishment of a working relationship between researchers and *community partners*. As Israel et al. (2003: 56-58) have observed, participatory research is fundamentally dependent on "collaborative, equitable partnerships in all phases of the research," partnerships which "involve long-term process and commitment." At a large scale, participatory research typically represents a partnership between a university (or other research institution) and a community. The dynamics of this institutional partnership have been given particular attention in the field of public health (Suarez-Balcazar et al. 2004). In practice, however, partnerships are formed between individual researchers and individual community members, and it is this relationship with which I am primarily concerned here.

The identities, social positions, viewpoints, and agendas of the individuals who partner on a project will have a determinative effect on the scope and direction of the project, as will the type of working relationship that they establish. This level of influence is entirely appropriate within the context of participatory research, but it must be consciously taken into account by everyone involved. As I will discuss in subsequent chapters, differences among community partners and partner-researcher relationships are perhaps the greatest contributors to differences among project results, so they merit considerable scrutiny.

According to IPRM, making contact and establishing an understanding with community partners is the first step of a participatory research project—indeed, the project does not really exist until such an understanding is reached. Contact can be

initiated in either direction: a scholar who has a research interest in a community may get in touch with potential partners there, or community members who want to undertake some local initiative may get in touch with a researcher whom they think can help them accomplish their goals. The latter is preferable in terms of establishing a healthy power dynamic between researchers and community partners: partners who have intentionally solicited researcher input will probably feel greater ownership over the project, and they will be less likely to feel imposed upon by the researcher's agenda. My own research has relied on both kinds of contact (partly due to the different roles played by various community partners, as detailed below).

Even if contact is initiated by the researcher, a project will not succeed unless the community partner also feels that he is getting something out of the process; otherwise, he is simply giving something valuable (time, effort, local knowledge) to the researcher and getting nothing in turn. That is "extractive" research, which is ethically problematic and breeds community resentment (Wilmsen in preparation: 24). In effect, then, the project must serve both the partner's and the researcher's purposes. Brosius and Russell emphasize that researchers should be sensitive to the "hidden agendas" of the community members with whom they work closely, because these agendas may bias the information they provide (2003: 43). This is certainly true, but agendas are also a necessity of participatory research, so they should be engaged rather than avoided.

Consideration of agendas illuminates a broader point about community partners: by and large, they are atypical of the communities they represent in a number of ways. In these distinctions lie both their value and their limitations as research collaborators. First of all, as already discussed, partners must have an agenda, some sort of motivation to take

an active role in the research enterprise. Most likely, this agenda is the reason that they are even considering being, or being considered for, community partners: either they are pursuing a campaign that led them to contact the researcher in the first place, or their record of leadership brought them to the researcher's attention as an important initial contact. Such individuals are often labeled—by themselves or others—as *community activists*, *grassroots leaders*, and the like. They are regarded with a mixture of respect and bemusement by their fellow community members, who are generally less engaged in confronting local problems.

For a variety of reasons, the outlook of these potential partners enables them to see the possible value of the proposed research and to feel comfortable interacting with outside researchers. Frequently, these individuals have had extended exposure to a broader world beyond their community, so they are seeing the community and the challenges it faces in a broader context. In my experience, a disproportionate number of community partners share the following general life history: they were born in the community, left it (typically to pursue higher education), lived elsewhere for multiple years, and then returned to the community as working adults. These individuals are doubly atypical: first, they were among a minority of rural community members who moved far from their homes to begin with, and a minority that pursued higher education. Second, they were among a smaller minority who elected to return to those rural communities during their working lives. This characterization applies to at least eight of the fourteen community partners with whom I have collaborated on the POL and LTP projects. Varied social/cultural/economic factors in their backgrounds, combined with personal inclinations and aptitudes, have enabled such individuals to deviate from local

norms. As a result, they are more likely than their neighbors to express a well-articulated sense of place, tempered by critical distance, and strongly-held positions on the solutions to local problems—traits which simultaneously facilitate their interactions with researchers, bias their perspectives, and separate them from the community at large.

The atypical characteristics of community partners have invaluable benefits for participatory research, but they can also present problems. As mentioned above, partners' agendas will inevitably color the project, influencing how the project is designed, who is interviewed, and how the project is perceived in the community. Interviewees, for example, may modify the information they provide based on their assumptions about the community partner's expectations (as well as the researcher's expectations, of course). While being associated with a particular community member will open many doors for a researcher, it may close some as well, and those can be harder to perceive. Moreover, like that of any individual, a community partner's social network is finite, and it may exclude some local subpopulations. In pursuit of greater participant diversity, a researcher may need to move beyond the bounds of this network, which can be awkward if it entails interrogating the partner's social location.

Ultimately, articulating the role of community partners in a given research endeavor requires examining the purpose of that endeavor as a whole—and thereby once again confronting tensions among paradigms. From a traditional positivist perspective, the researcher is trying to uncover some underlying truth—in this case, perhaps, a community's "true values" with regard to the landscape and "true attitudes" toward landscape change. From this perspective, the agenda of a particular community partner is a distortion that needs to be corrected for in order to properly perceive the social reality.

From a constructivist perspective, however, it could be argued that the research goal is to study that subjective agenda itself rather than trying to see past it—what worldview informs this community partner's ethos, and how can this worldview serve as a lens for understanding community and ecological change? In other words, what can we learn from trying to see a community and a place through our partner's eyes? An action research perspective may lead the researcher even further in this direction: rather than merely seeking to understand the partner's agenda, the researcher may seek to support that agenda by increasing the partner's capacity to effect the social changes she is advocating. According to this reasoning, if a researcher deems a partner's cause worthy, he should put his research in service to that cause.

There are dangers in conducting research that tends too far to either extreme. If a researcher regards a community partner's subjective position as merely an obstacle to be overcome in the pursuit of "truth," then she is devaluing the partner's notion of truth in favor of her own. In so doing, she risks alienating her collaborator, not to mention overlooking a valuable, proximate source of local insight. If, on the other hand, she uncritically embraces her partner's cause as her own, then she is also limiting the range of insights available to her. This can become particularly problematic if she later realizes that she does not wholeheartedly agree with her partner's agenda but has already aligned herself with it to the point that she cannot effectively achieve critical distance. After all, external critique can be one of the most valuable services a researcher can provide to a community partner: the researcher can provide viewpoints on local issues that the partner, wholly immersed in those issues, has not been able to see.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I have increasingly come to feel that helping to empower community partners is perhaps the most powerful and concrete contribution that a researcher can make. Ideally, a participatory research project leaves community members in a better position to address local issues themselves, rather than continuing to rely on external support—the ultimate success of the project can be judged on the extent to which this takes place. However, neither researcher nor partner receive maximal benefit from research that simply reiterates what the partner already knows and believes. Instead, the research process should be a referendum on the partner's agenda, testing the persuasiveness of that agenda in the community at large. The results of this process should nuance, and thereby bolster, the partner's efforts to promote collective action.

2.3.1. Different roles for community partners

The community partner with whom a researcher first makes contact in initiating a project need not be the only partner he works with over the course of the project. Indeed, it is frequently necessary to collaborate with multiple partners as the research process evolves. Moreover, the roles that partners play in the research endeavor are mutable, evolving along with the project—some partners play a number of roles at various times. I refer to this range of community partners and researchers collectively as the *project team*. The following is a typology of roles that community partners played in POL and LTP.

- *Overall project designer/advisor:* One or more community partners worked with the researcher(s) to design an effective research project in their community. These partners shared authority with the researcher over the project's direction and were involved and consulted throughout the course of the project. This role was formalized in LTP through the creation of a *community advisory committee*.

Partners who played this role were not necessarily directly involved in fieldwork, however.

- *Sponsor:* Partner entities sponsored the research without necessarily participating directly in its design or implementation. In POL, these sponsors were Catawba Lands Conservancy and the LandTrust for Central North Carolina; in LTP, the project was sponsored by Macon Tomorrow, fiscally sponsored by the Western North Carolina Alliance, and endorsed by the Macon County Planning Board. In effect, these sponsors were the researchers' clients: the organizations contracted with the researchers to work for them. The sponsors offered the researchers local credibility by publicly sanctioning the research initiative (in addition to sometimes providing funding, fund-raising capability, or institutional resources); in exchange, the researchers investigated an issue of interest to the sponsor and shared the results with them.
- *Sub-project collaborator:* In the course of research, project team members occasionally realized that a particular line of inquiry should be pursued beyond the social networks or competencies of the existing team members. An additional partner was therefore enlisted to collaborate on this "sub-project." As with the overall project, the sub-project was designed cooperatively by the partner and the researcher; the roles that each played in the sub-project could differ from those in the overall project. Examples of sub-project collaborators include Jerry McCombs, Beth Isenhour, and Beth Elmore in Eastern Catawba (see Section 3.2.2, Box 2.1).

- *Fieldwork collaborator:* Some community partners worked with researchers on carrying out project fieldwork. Whether or not the partners who were involved in project design were also directly involved in fieldwork depended on the structure of each partnership, as well as the partners' personal availability and preferences. It is worth noting that community members can be involved in project implementation in a variety of ways (for example, as interviewers) without necessarily being partners: they may not have the same degree of decision-making authority as partners. These roles will be discussed in subsequent sections.
- *Meeting coordinator:* A key role that community partners played was in coordinating the public meetings at which research results were shared with the community. The partners were typically better positioned than the researchers to supervise meeting logistics, attract publicity, and rhetorically frame the event within the context of local discourses. Public meetings were collaborative productions that required partners and researchers to jointly decide how to present their work and what kind of feedback/discussion to elicit.

Discussion of "sub-project collaborators" raises the important issue of scale in research partnerships. As mentioned in Chapter One, the CBNRM literature has been rightly critiqued for frequently assigning the concept of "community" only to a particular (fairly small) spatial scale (Agrawal and Gibson 1999, Berkes 2004). Similarly, research on CBNRM methodology often assumes that communities represented by community partners in a given project exist at a single scale. This is not necessarily true, as the example of POL illustrates. The POL project was sponsored by Catawba Lands Conservancy and the LandTrust for Central North Carolina, non-profit conservation

organizations that, between them, serve the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina. These organizations and the individuals that represent them were, in one sense, my community partners. As part of that regional project, however, I worked in four selected rural areas within the region, and in each of those I collaborated with local residents. These individuals were also my community partners. It is important, then, to acknowledge all the scales of partnership out of which a project is conceived.

2.4. Collaboratively defining project goals and methods

Once initial contact had been established, the POL/LTP researchers met with the community partner (or partners) to decide what the project should try to achieve and how best to achieve it. Such conversations require all parties to foreground their agendas: everyone should know what everyone else is hoping to get out of the project. If there are discrepancies among these agendas, this is the best time to address them.

In IPRM, rigor is regarded as processual: it is determined by the thoroughness and persuasiveness of the means through which research goals are pursued, not the nature of those goals. The substantive research agenda is left to the discretion of the team that undertakes a particular project; each participatory research project should respond to the particular aspirations articulated by the participating community members. As discussed in Sections 1.5.2. and 1.5.5, communities should not be assumed to support conservation. Therefore, if the project team wants a project to enable sustainable resource conservation/stewardship, that goal should be explicitly incorporated into the research agenda.

The planning process is hampered by the fact that no one yet knows how the research process is going to go in a given community. Setting high goals is good for morale, but failure to reach those goals could be bitterly disappointing. It is advisable, therefore, to articulate a range of goals, from more proximate/likely to more far-reaching/optimistic, instead of a simple success/failure binary. In retrospect, the POL/LTP teams were too cautious in our goal-setting: we focused on our proximate goals, and were less prepared to handle the more far-reaching consequences of our success.

Having agreed upon goals, a team then has to decide how to implement the projects: what approach is likely to work well in each community? Researchers bring proposed methodologies to this conversation, while partners bring local knowledge. Willingness to compromise is again critical at this point, as competing visions for what the project "should look like" confront one another. The team has to agree on what data is needed, how it should be gathered, and by whom.

It is particularly important to clearly define both researchers' and community partners' responsibilities at this juncture, in order to avoid confusion or disappointment later on. That said, we found that goals, methods, and team member roles continued to evolve over the course of the POL/LTP projects. The team should reconvene periodically and stay in regular touch, so as to keep each other updated on these changes and seek each other's input.

2.5. Data collection: documentary ethnography

There is no single methodological prescription for data collection in a CBNRM research project: techniques are limited only by what the project team deems locally appropriate and feasible. The methods should be chosen because they are deemed the most effective ways of obtaining answers to the research questions being asked. In POL/LTP, we addressed questions about community ecological discourses using documentary ethnography; in LTP, geospatial analyses were also used to address questions about the relevance of landscape change information. My own research relied mostly on the former.

I agree with Brosius and Russell (2003) that for a nuanced understanding of social dynamics in a community, there is no substitute for the time-intensive, face-to-face contact of ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnography benefits from the fact that its basic currency—direct, interpersonal interaction and dialogue—is familiar and intuitive to practically everyone. In every community where I have worked, such personal contact would be a necessity anyway for any outsider who wanted to be trusted by community members; ethnography can accomplish the double goal of collecting information and building social ties. Indeed, the personal experiences of the ethnographer become her data, as visual anthropologist Sarah Pink has noted: "[R]ather than being a method for the collection of 'data,' ethnography is a process of interpreting and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or 'truthful' account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was

produced. This may entail reflexive, collaborative or participatory methods" (2001: 18). It is for these reasons, I think, that my partners have all been so receptive to an ethnographic approach; it has seemed the clearest way to bring research—and researchers—into the life of the community.

The seeming transparency of ethnographic methods, however, obscures—and to some extent accounts for—their exploitative potential. The history of ethnography is no less tainted by injustice than other research methodologies; on the contrary, the betrayals perpetrated on communities by ethnographers are particularly notorious. Nearly as renowned are cases in which communities protected their secrets by deliberately misleading ethnographers. The external resemblance that ethnographic research bears to casual social fraternization masks the underlying power dynamic between researcher and subject, as the former seeks intimate personal information from the latter. Recognition of this dynamic has caused the backlash against ethnography in many communities (Bernard 2002, Wilmsen in preparation).

On the other hand, ethnographic methods can be empowering to communities. When approached as such, the ethnographic encounter can be a gesture of profound respect toward the subject. An investigator's willingness to spend considerable time and effort listening to, observing, and recording an individual's life conveys the value that the investigator places on that individual's perspective. For many people, particularly those who feel socially marginalized in some way, being the object of such attention is a novel and flattering experience. I see this attention as being the primary service that a researcher can render to a community, in exchange for the openness that they have offered him. The researcher should offer it as though it were a gift, in order to convey the

respect it represents—and in order to make sure that the gift is wanted! In short, the researcher should approach the community in the posture of a student, rather than an expert (being an actual student, I have found, helps in this regard).[9] If he does, his gift is likely to be appreciated; I have frequently been thanked by community members for the attention that I gave them. Though the community's ultimate judgment of research will depend on how the information collected is used and re-presented, an empowering ethnographic research experience sets the right tone.

The POL and LTP project teams employed a suite of methods that I refer to as *documentary ethnography*. *Documentary* is perhaps an even more elusive concept than *ethnography*—as Robert Coles (1997) recounts, the term has even migrated among parts of speech, evolving from a verb into an adjective and then a noun. Coles characterizes documentary work as comprising "a twofold struggle: that of writers and photographers and filmmakers who attempt to ascertain what *is*, what can be noted, recorded, pictured; and that of presentation—how to elicit the interest of others, and how to provide a context, so that an incident, for instance, is connected to the conditions that informed and prompted its occurrence" (20). In other words, documentary work consists of recording phenomena with the intention of presenting them to an audience in an interesting and

[9] Having conducted fieldwork both as a student and as the representative of a non-profit organization, I have observed the uniquely privileged position that students occupy in the public imagination. By and large, student status appears to connote both the noble pursuit of "truth" and bright-eyed youth (the former can also pertain to academic researchers generally, though the latter does not). Government representatives are frequently assumed to be acting in corrupt self-interest, as are non-profit representatives to a lesser degree. Professors may be associated with an out-of-touch liberal elite. Nothing lowers people's defenses, however, like a "student research project." Many people seem to assume 1) that students have no agenda, and 2) that their research will have no public impact. This latter perception can be an obstacle for the student researcher, since it can lead community members to dismiss the significance of a research endeavor (many interviewees have told me that they "hope I get a good grade" on a project, as though that was the only conceivable goal of the research). For the most part, however, these perceptions offer students an unusual degree of access—access that they must be careful not to exploit. It is tempting to avoid scrutiny by downplaying one's work as "just a student project" and to attribute misrepresentations to incompetence rather than to bias. These disingenuous tactics will backfire if a project is subsequently revealed to be more than it appeared: community attitudes toward a researcher can then quickly sour.

illuminating way—a representational view of research consistent with Pink's (2001, above). This documentary intention underlies the IPRM approach: rather than collecting information for its own sake, the project team collects information with outputs in mind—in this case, ways of presenting findings back to the community that engage the senses,[10] prompt reflection, and stimulate further discussion.

With Coles (1997), I see documentary work as narrative work: documentarians are engaged in recording and then reconstructing narratives. Each project team, then, consciously undertakes a *discursive intervention*, an elicitation of discursive elements that can then be "rearticulated," reordered into new, "cocreated" narratives (Deluca 1999: 37-38, 40; Harper et al. 2004: 201; see Section 1.5.4). In POL/LTP, our methods of initiating these interventions included recorded interviews, photography, and participant observation; I will describe each below.

2.5.1. Recorded interviews

Recorded interviews were the heart of the ethnographic research process in each community. The ways in which these interviews were carried out varied, reflecting the differences among the individuals in each project team and the structures of their working relationships. The project teams determined how both interviewers and interviewees would be selected.

Interviews were conducted by researchers, community partners, other community members, or some combination of the above. From a participatory research perspective, involving community members in the data collection process is generally seen as desirable, because it increases community engagement in and ownership of the research

[10] This approach acknowledges the "embodied and sensory" lived experiences of community members and ethnographers alike, and the role of the sensory in social life (Pink 2006: 46).

process. Community members may or may not want to be directly involved, however. For example, if a community partner sees the study as a vehicle through which she can personally engage a range of fellow citizens, then she may be enthusiastic about doing interviewing herself. On the other hand, she may not be interested in or comfortable with conducting interviews: she may see the project as an opportunity to contract with someone else (a researcher) to do this work for her.

The project teams also had to confront the question of who was better positioned to collect honest input from community members. Interviewers who are community members themselves may have the local rhetorical competence to gather information that an outsider would not seek or notice. Furthermore, community members may open up to someone familiar in a way that they never would to a stranger—an important consideration when working in insular, rural communities. The reverse may also be true, however: community members may make observations to an outsider that they would not when speaking with one of their own. There are multiple possible reasons for this. If interviewed by a fellow community member, an interviewee may feel that certain points are too obvious to make: when a speaker can safely assume that his audience has a familiarity with and a known position on a topic, spelling that topic out becomes awkward because it violates the conversation maxim of parsimony (Nofsinger 1991). From an analytical perspective, however, it may be desirable to ask interviewees to explicitly state the obvious, so that underlying assumptions and associations can be exposed. An outsider may be better positioned to elicit such "obvious" statements because of their apparent lack of local knowledge and rhetorical expectations. Interviewees may also divulge information to outsiders because of their perceived

neutrality—an opinion, for example, that they might conceal from a fellow community member for fear of causing offense. An outsider's value to the project team as an interviewer, then, can largely be attributed to her local naiveté: like a child, she can eschew social convention and ask obtuse, outlandish, or controversial questions without the social consequences that a community member would suffer.

Community members and researchers may also be able to establish different communicative and metacommunicative expectations in an interview. Though an interview superficially resembles a casual conversation, the two are actually distinct *genres*, "different ways of (inter)acting discoursally" (Fairclough 2003: 26). In particular, interviews can place restrictions on conversational turn-taking and the kinds of communicative actions that participants can employ (Nofsinger 1991). There can be investigative advantages to conducting interviews that are more or less like casual conversations. Interviews with more conversational norms can make interviewees comfortable, exploring topics in an un-self-conscious, collaborative way with interviewers. On the other hand, a more formalized question-and-answer routine can cause interviewees to examine familiar issues in new ways, reflecting at greater length and in greater depth than they ordinarily would in conversation.

Consider the following two interview excerpts, both from the POL project in the Stanley Creek community. The first interview was conducted by me (GC); the second was conducted by my community partner, Joyce Burt (JB). Numbers in parentheses indicate pause duration (in seconds); bracketed text indicates simultaneous speech.

Excerpt 2.1

GC: What do you hope that your grandchildren will- will see and experience here? (1.3)
PT: Well, the two over here already know how to pick up rocks out of the garden and what the garden is, how you work in the garden. (1.3) Things like that. I mean, this one's a little bit too young yet, but by next spring he'll be (1.7) ready to learn how to do things out in the garden.
GC: Mm hm. (2.6)
PT: They'll- they- if they- (2.5) they live with the land, they'll- they'll stay on it. (4.3)
GC: And their children, and their [children's children]
PT: [And on and on.] It depends on how well they've connected with it. (0.8)
GC: Mm hm.
PT: You can't predict [how] each generation's going to connect to the land. (1.1)
GC: [mm]
GC: Right. (1.7)
PT: You can only hope.

Excerpt 2.2

JB: [hu ha ha ha]
LG: [You could see the road up and down here!]
JB: [Oh I know, oh I know!]
MG: [Yeah,] down through there you could almost see the creek bottom and all [and I thought]
JB: [Oh gosh]
MG: I can't believe it, it's just so grown up now, [that you, you can't see anything.]
JB: [That's right. It really has] changed a lot. Since the- Actually, in a way we have more forest now than we did, you know, when my [grandparents were here]
LG: [Well, they had to clear the land to farm it.]
MG: [That's true.]

These two passages differ markedly in the way that turn-taking is organized. In the first excerpt, segments of speech rarely overlap; on the contrary, there are often significant pauses between utterances. In the second excerpt, every utterance overlaps with the one preceding or following it, reflecting a fast-paced repartee in which the

interlocutors are continually interrupting and talking over each other. This kind of interaction resembles a casual conversation. Interaction in the first excerpt, by contrast, adheres to more formal interviewing norms: rather than being an equally vocal participant in the dialogue, the interviewer uses pauses and brief prompts to draw the interviewee out.

In POL/LTP, interviews by outside researchers more often tended to resemble the first excerpt, while interviews by community members tended to resemble the second—though this was certainly not always the case. I see the more "conversational" interviews conducted by community members as reflecting varying combinations of two factors: 1) a convivial, social relationship between interviewer and interviewee; and 2) the interviewer's lack of comfort with the interactional norms of more formalized interviewing. Even if trained in interviewing procedure by the researchers, community members may find interviewing norms awkward when talking to their neighbors. For example, the interviewing practice of suppressing one's own verbal response to a statement may seem artificial and rude. A more "friendly" approach may be desired. Interviews by community members often convey a sense that both interviewer and interviewee are on the "same side." This makes it possible for the interviewer to justify the more formalized aspects of the interview by attributing them to the researcher, as is evident in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 2.3

JB: Oh I know it. It looks really bad down there. (.8) But anyway I gotta start out like this. Uh, my name's Joyce Wallace Burt. Uh, gee, I guess the date, uh, let's see, is the 24th?
IH: This is.

By saying "I gotta start out like this," Burt suggests that she needs to follow the standard interview protocol because of an external requirement, not because she herself wants to do so. I see no problem with this device as a way for a community member to comfortably accomplish the more formal steps of the interviewing process.

In short, excerpts 2.1 and 2.2 reflect two different approaches to knowledge creation: one more unilateral, the other more collaborative. The approaches could be summarized as *tell me what you think about this topic* versus *let's figure this topic out together*. In each excerpt, observations are made that could only have been elicited by the type of interviewing being conducted: the interviewee in Excerpt 2.1 is given the time to meditate on intergenerational sense of place, while the participants in Excerpt 2.2 draw upon their shared memories to reconstruct a key historic land cover change. This illustrates the value that different interviewers with different styles can add to the research effort; as long as different approaches to interviewing are enabling the collection of valuable data, I see no reason to enforce rigid conformity.[11]

Because of differences in the availability and goals of community partners, interviewing responsibilities were divided up differently in each POL/LTP project. In Stanley Creek (Gaston County) and Western Rowan County, community partners conducted the majority of the interviews, while in the other communities researchers conducted more. In Western Rowan and the Uwharries, interviews were frequently conducted by a community partner and a researcher together (see Figure 2.2). In Eastern

[11] Not all variations in interviewing praxis are productive, however. For example, lack of confidence with interviewing protocol sometimes leads interviewers to adopt a hyper-formal, rather than casual, style. They proceed through the interview guide stiffly and rapidly, without taking the time to draw interviewees out on topics of interest. While such an approach could be appropriate for structured interviewing, it yields responses that are too terse and superficial to take advantage of a semi-structured interviewing instrument. In such cases, a researcher should not hesitate to recommend changes to an interviewer's style.

Catawba County and Macon County, community members who were not partners were trained as interviewers (see Box 2.1). The number of interviewers per project ranged from two to eight.

Figure 2.2. Gabriel Cumming (left) and community partner Adele Goodman (right, back to the camera) conduct an interview in western Rowan County. Photo by Kyra Weinkle.

After selecting interviewers, the project team's next task was identifying interviewees. To do this, we used a combination of *purposive* and *snowball* sampling (Bernard 2002). The project team would identify the different subpopulations that should be represented in the project, taking into account gender, race/ethnicity, age, local/outsider status, occupation, and other locally-relevant variables. Community partners also came up with a list of community members whom they considered to have particularly valuable, distinctive, or well-articulated connections to place. Based on this list and our diversity goals, we would then select a smaller list of initial interviewee prospects. Since the project team's social network was inherently partial, we would then rely on interviewees and other community contacts for further interviewee nominations. After interviewing someone, the interviewer would typically ask them whom else they would recommend to be interviewed. Then those people were asked for their

recommendations, and so on. The result was an interviewee population that consisted of peer-nominated individuals across multiple degrees of social separation.

The peer-referral process was invaluable in terms of gaining access to interviewees. In the communities where I have conducted fieldwork, as in many communities, familiarity is fundamental to trust. If an interviewer indicates that she was referred to an individual by a fellow community member, then that individual is likely to welcome an interview. Without such a referral, the interviewer would frequently be refused. Out of 118 attempted POL/LTP interviews, only one prospective interviewee chose not to participate—a response rate (99.15%) that would be very hard to achieve through random interviewee selection.

Box 2.1. Involving middle-school students as interviewers: *Knights, Camera, Action!*

In Eastern Catawba County, I broadened community participation in the project by involving a group of middle-school students in the documentary research process. In collaboration with Principal Beth Isenhour and science teacher Beth Elmore, I established an after-school club at Mill Creek Middle School (which, in a moment of inspiration, Isenhour christened *Knights, Camera, Action!* after the school mascot: the Knight).

Members of the eleven-student group conducted video-recorded interviews with community elders (typically their own grandparents) and created photo essays depicting their favorite local places—a proven participatory technique in documentary and natural resource research (López et al. 2005, Brandenburg and Caroll 1995). Interview excerpts and images by these students were included in the documentary that was used to publicly present the findings of the Eastern Catawba project.

Figure 2.3. Zack Lowman on his grandfather's farm, in a picture by *Knights, Camera, Action!*

Our interviews were *semi-structured* (Bernard 2002): in a given community, each interview covered the same topics in the same overall order, but interviewees and interviewers had leeway to further explore topics of particular interest that might emerge during a given conversation. The interview guide (Appendix B) included topics of

particular relevance in each community but was always organized around five general themes: the interviewee's connection to *land* (particularly his own home), his own *life story*, the *community*, *changes* that were happening in the area, and *visions* for the future of the community. An adaptive instrument, the interview guide was refined over the course of the research.

For the most part, the interviews were recorded using minidisk digital audio recorders, which are compact, relatively user-friendly, and represent a significant increase in recording quality over analog cassettes. In some cases, interviews were recorded using digital video (DV) camcorders. Obviously, audio and video recording produce different documentary outputs; I believe that either can be used successfully in IPRM. I will discuss the differences between constructing an audio-based and video-based documentary below. For now, the main distinction I want to draw between the two media is that we found audio to be more convenient. Our projects relied on a range of interviewers, who differed considerably in their technical proficiency and confidence with regard to the recording equipment. It was easier for an amateur interviewer, typically working alone, to make a satisfactory audio recording than it would have been for them to make a visually-effective video recording. Video recording benefits from a two-person team, including a trained videographer who can focus on such tasks as composing the shot. Our audio equipment is smaller and less expensive than video equipment, making it better suited for sharing among multiple interviewers. Finally, interviewees tend to be less self-conscious in the presence of an audio recorder than they are under the gaze of a camcorder; indeed, many interviewees appeared to quickly ignore the recorder's presence.

2.5.2. Photography

Rather than video, still photography comprised the primary visual medium of our documentary fieldwork. Coles observes that in documentary work, "the issue is that of location—how a particular… researcher decides to commit himself or herself with respect to those others being studied…" (1997: 32). The issue of location becomes particularly explicit in the case of photography: who will take a photograph, where will it be taken, what will be depicted and what will be excluded? Depending on how these questions are negotiated, photography can be exploitative or empowering.

As discussed above, the exploitative potential of ethnographic research lies in its seeming transparency. When photographs are seen simply as objective representations of reality, the agendas or representational choices of the photographer are surreptitiously imposed on the viewer. If, instead, the view represented in photography can be understood as constructed and inherently partial, then photographs can be seen as reflecting the negotiated intentions of those involved in the photographic process (Pink 2001: 8-9, 58). When anyone—researcher or otherwise—takes a picture, "they do so with reference to specific theories of photography and in the context of particular social relationships…. A reflexive approach to ethnographic photography means researchers being aware of the theories that inform their own photographic practice, of their relationships with their photographic subjects, and of the theories that inform their subjects' approaches to photography" (Pink 2001: 54). Photography, from this perspective, constitutes an encounter between the "photographic cultures" of the photographer and the subject (Pink 2001: 58).

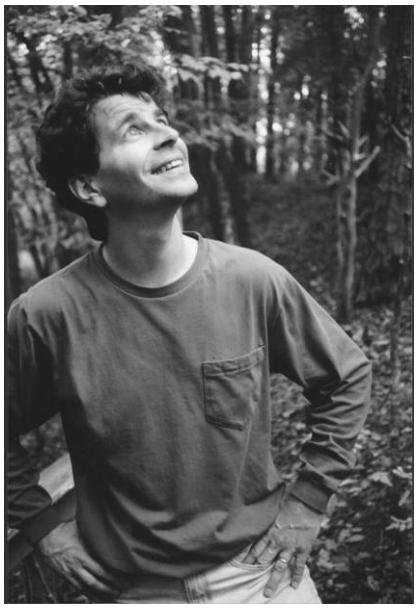
As a participatory research tool, then, photography "usually involves ethnographers engaging in some way with the photographic culture of their informants. In some cases this could involve an attempt to reproduce the kinds of images that are popular in informants' photographic cultures. In other projects, ethnographers may want to produce photographs that refer to local photographic conventions, but that also conform to the demands of an academic discipline. The intentions and objectives of researchers and informants combine in their negotiations to determine the content of the photographs…" (Pink 2001: 58-59). This negotiation is further mediated if, as in the case of POL/LTP, multiple photographers are involved, some of whom are operating within a local photographic culture and others of whom are approaching it from the outside. In our projects, the opportunity for photography typically followed an interview: the interviewee was then invited to take the interviewer outside and show them some of the places that had come up in the interview as being particularly personally meaningful. The understanding was that the interviewer would take pictures during this time, both of the interviewee and of her "special places." The kind of document that emerged from these joint explorations of place depended on the aesthetic expectations of both parties and the negotiation between them.

Consider the three images in Figure 2.4 (below). Picture A, taken while Robert Eades and I walked around his property, was permitted by Eades, but was largely an expression of my theory of photography. Informed by the work of photographers like Henri Cartier-Bresson, I thought my job as photographer was to capture a spontaneous "moment"—in this case, a moment of engagement between a person and the environment. Therefore, I continually took pictures as Eades and I moved around the

landscape. The result was an image that I liked much more than he did. To me, the photograph reflected the joy that Eades felt when out walking in his woods. To him, the photograph made him look naively starry-eyed and silly. After some debate, I reluctantly removed the photograph from some public project materials.

Picture B reflects a case in which the subject's theory of photography exerted more control over the image-making process. Again, I was taking pictures of an interviewee (Alan Allman) on his property. This time, however, my subject did not want to be caught off guard: he selected the location for the photograph, as well as consciously choosing his attire (a property-rights activist, Allman styles himself as "the villain" in planning debates—this was his explanation for why he chose the black cowboy hat). The subject faces the camera and smiles, in accordance with the vernacular conventions of portrait photography. Most of the photographs taken by community members also conform to these conventions.

Picture C is a more hybrid image, emerging from the intersection of community member and researcher goals. The picture was taken during a religious service held under the open-air "arbor" at Motts Grove Campground. Not wishing to be overly intrusive, I was taking cues from my community partner, Spencer Graham, as to when photography would be appropriate. The scene depicted here was one that Graham specifically urged me to photograph. The result was a picture that satisfied my interest in depicting a powerful "moment" while also achieving Graham's goal of depicting a significant event in the lives of people he knew.

A 

B 

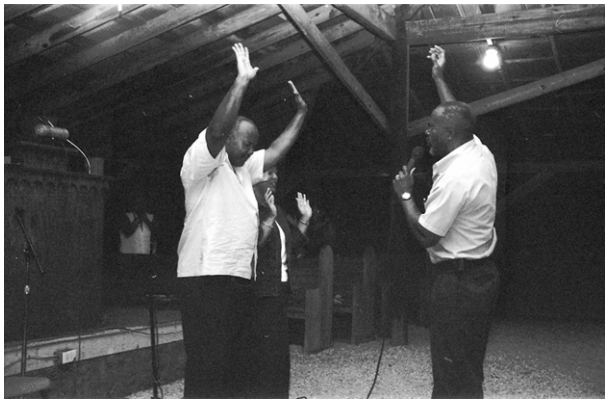
C 

Figure 2.4. The outcomes of negotiating the "photographic cultures" of researchers and community members. Picture A: Robert Eades on his property, Eastern Catawba County. Picture B: Allan Allman on his property, Macon County. Picture C: Reverend Walter Pegues praying over a couple, Motts Grove Camp Meeting, Eastern Catawba County.

The choice of black and white or color photography also depends on photographic culture. Pictures A and C are black and white, while B is color. In the era of color photography, shooting in black and white represents a conscious choice to invoke the history of the photographic medium. Today, black and white documentary photography risks seeming clichéd or nostalgic—an attempt to place subjects in a timeless rural landscape already peopled by the images of Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and the like.

On the other hand, black and white photographs can be effective as a means of encouraging audiences to view quotidian scenes in new ways, because they represent a level of abstraction from the full-color world. In seeking to participate in contemporary, local photographic cultures, however, I came to feel that color photography was usually preferable: I used primarily black-and-white photography in POL, but transitioned to primarily color photography in LTP.

In addition to the participatory photography carried out with interviewees, many other pictures were taken in the course of POL/LTP. Most of these were contributions to an "image library" documenting a range of local landscapes and community scenes, which could be used to illustrate statements in the audio-visual documentaries. Some of these photographs were taken in the course of participant observation (see below).

2.5.3. Participant Observation

Often, the best way to build ties in a community and get a feel for local perspectives is by joining community members in doing whatever they are already doing, i.e. participant observation (Bernard 2002). While working on the POL/LTP projects, I attended a wide variety of events, including family reunions, church services, festivals, public meetings, an auction, a pig-picking, and a cane-syrup making. These gatherings provided great opportunities to meet people and learn more about the social dynamics of a community while making community members more comfortable with my presence. Sometimes documentation is appropriate in these circumstances, and sometimes it is not—the participant observer must remain alert for appropriate opportunities to take photographs or make an impromptu recording.

The example of camp meetings in eastern Catawba County—introduced at the beginning of Chapter One—most clearly demonstrates the importance that participant observation can have in ethnographic research. *Camp meetings* are religious revivals that are held over the course of several weeks each August-September. Though originally organized around the visits of itinerant Methodist preachers ("circuit riders"), camp meetings became a permanent fixture of the Catawba River Valley by the 1830s. Catawba County's camp meetings have been held in the same locations—known as *campgrounds*—for more than 100 years: Ball's Creek Campground was established in 1853, while McKenzie's Grove and Mott's Grove were established in the 1870s (Freeze 1995). Camp meeting illustrates why participatory research methodologies must be adapted to each community: this institution, virtually unknown a couple of counties away, is culturally central in Eastern Catawba. When I began working with partners there, it quickly became apparent that I needed to attend camp meetings in order to become culturally and rhetorically competent in the community. Epitomizing local discourse, the campground even has its own unique vocabulary: *tent* means cabin and *arbor* means open-sided, tin-roofed pavilion. In order to meet prospective interviewees and successfully understand their sense of place, there was no substitute for spending late summer evenings at the campground. Camp meetings were also a key venue for sharing project results with the community.

2.6. Analyzing interviews for themes

Having gathered a body of ethnographic data from a variety of sources, we then sought to identify its emergent properties: shared community traits that were not

discernable in single individuals. In POL/LTP, the goal of these analyses was the creation of audio-visual documentaries that would be shown to the community in public meetings. In order for these documentaries to be well received, they needed to plausibly reflect the narratives through which community members organized their experience of place.

Narratives are crucial to the re-presentation of discourse, because, as Hajer (1995) has noted, it is through narrative that people make sense of discursive fields (see discussion in Chapter One). In Fairclough's terms, discourses are "particular ways of representing part of the world," whereas narratives are *genres*, "ways of (inter)acting discoursally" (2003: 26, 68-69). Simply put, narratives are something that people *do* with discourse. Narrative is not the only type of discursive action people can take: Fairclough also identifies other genres, such as *dialogue* and *argument*. The interviewee utterances elicited through ethnographic interviewing are not necessarily in narrative form (and interviewing can be considered a genre in its own right, as previously noted). However, constructing narratives is the means of *legitimating* statements (Fairclough 2003) that is most readily achievable within the context of a documentary.

In order to enable the construction of composite narratives from multiple sources, we took a *categorical*, rather than *holistic*, approach to narrative analysis: instead of considering each individual's narrative as a whole, all the narratives were dissected into discrete speech acts—which I refer to as *discourse segments*—and grouped into categories (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 1998). In practice, this dissection consisted of *coding* the raw data—identifying *themes* (i.e. *analytic categories*) in texts and annotating them for the presence of those themes. Coding, in Bernard's terms, "turns

free-flowing texts into a set of nominal variables" (2002: 463). Consistent with a grounded theory approach, we began with *inductive* or *"open" coding*: allowing themes to emerge from the data (once these categories have been analytically solidified, they can become the basis of pre-defined *deductive coding*) (Bernard 2002).

Interviews are typically easier to code in transcribed form, though more complex social interactions may require coding of the original recorded footage. Qualitative analysis software can be helpful in keeping track of many codes across multiple texts—I have used Atlas.ti for this purpose.

2.7. Creating the documentary: constructing multi-vocal narratives

Creation of the audio-visual documentary was an extension of the foregoing coding process: the aim was to organize and present selected interviewee statements in a way that would be compelling to a community audience. This process was guided not only by the narrative analyses, but by the entire ethnographic research process thus far: over the course of conducting fieldwork in a community, the project teams began to get a sense of which views, expressed by which speakers, were likely to particularly resonate with the community at large. These "working hypotheses," as confirmed or nuanced by the data coding, were the starting points for making effective documentaries.

We then had to decide which perspectives are salient enough to be represented in the documentary, based on the prevalence of those perspectives in the data. The coded discourse segments were arrayed to represent the range of discursive positions that interviewees have taken on a given subject—what Q methodologists call a *concourse* (Brown 1980). From these *concourses* we chose *exemplars*, quotations from individual

interviews that were deemed to represent particular perspectives especially well. To be included in a documentary, an interview excerpt must not only convey an important message, but it must do so in a way that is aesthetically effective and pleasing. This means that the selection of exemplars ultimately required returning to the recorded source: a statement that was compelling in a transcript might nonetheless be a poor exemplar if, for example, it was not clearly audible on the recording.

As mentioned above, the appropriateness of each speaker also needs to be considered. The way in which an audience apprehends an utterance depends not only on its communicative attributes, but also on its metacommunicative attributes, which can be significantly affected by the identity of the speaker (Briggs 1986). An audience may applaud a statement by one individual and discredit the same statement if made by someone else—it all depends on the "epistemic standing" (Cox 2006: 310) of the speaker within a community's discourse.

Despite the importance of having the "right" speaker deliver each statement, it is also desirable in participatory research to represent all speakers. The empowerment value of interviewing depends on communicating to interviewees that their insights are important—an assurance that is betrayed if the interviewee's voice is not represented in the research product. Therefore, if possible, every interviewee should be represented in the documentary. Since the documentary needs to be short enough to hold the audience's attention (ours have ranged from 15 to 30 minutes in length), including everyone represents an admittedly daunting editing challenge.

To give the documentary coherence, the exemplars must then be organized into some sort of narrative order. Scholars disagree as to the defining structural attributes of

narrative, but most would probably agree that something needs to "happen" over the course of the narrative. Labov's classic narrative model includes an ordered sequence of narrative structures, as follows: 1) an *abstract*, a "brief summary of what the narrative is 'about'" (Hill 2005:172); 2) an *orientation* that sets the scene; 3) a *complicating action*, i.e. what happens; 4) a *result* or *resolution*; and 5) a *coda* that recapitulates and evaluates the narrative (Labov 1972, Hill 2005). Labov does not argue that all narratives contain all of these elements or follow this order; nonetheless, his model provides a useful overall structure. Indeed, the structure of the POL/LTP interviews anticipated such an ordering: interviewees first described what they valued about their local landscape and community (orientation); then they described how these attributes were changing (complicating action) and what had happened as a consequence of these changes (result); and finally, reflecting upon what had happened thus far, they opined as to the best direction for the future (coda). Though their section titles have been locally specific, all of our documentaries have followed this same basic, narrative progression.

The visual dimension of the documentary depends on whether the interviews were recorded in audio or video. Video imagery bears a greater visual *resemblance* to a face-to-face conversation (Denis 1991), so viewers may engage with it more readily; when a documentary is based in audio footage instead, audience members sometimes tell me that they wish they could see the speakers talking. However, the technique of combining audio excerpts with still images offers particular associative opportunities. A photograph, whether depicting the speaker or some aspect of the topic being addressed, can serve to illustrate, interpret, and extend the meaning of a recorded statement—effectively adding other levels of meaning to the narrative. We have used video editing

software (Final Cut Pro) to combine audio clips with relevant images of people and landscapes. To add visual interest or emphasis, the still images can then be "animated" within the digital environment, providing the effect of "panning across" or "zooming into" a scene. I have found this approach to be useful in combination with video footage, as well.

The resulting documentary product represents an audio-visual attempt to reflect, in narrative form, a community's experience of and aspirations for their landscape. The documentary is at once a single, "multi-vocal" narrative (McDowell 1996) and multiple, interwoven narratives. On the one hand, all of the exemplar statements comprise a shared narrative arc that propels the documentary forward. On the other hand, the documentary does not represent the community as monolithic: tensions and discrepancies between the views expressed are not reconciled. Because of this, distinct narrative strands can be isolated from the whole—narratives that are parallel in structure but reference different values, focus on different issues, and draw different conclusions. Interweaving these narratives, rather than isolating them, serves to illuminate both moments of conjuncture and disjuncture in community discourse.

In DeLuca's (1999) terms, this documentary editing process involves *disarticulating* discursive elements from their original contexts and *rearticulating* them in new ways. As discourse segments are transplanted from interviews into multi-vocal narratives, they can take on new or altered meanings. Rather than simply being a reflection of existing community discourse, then, the resulting documentary represents a "discursive intervention" that manipulates the framing of resource management issues.

Such a re-framing aims to elicit recognition from local audiences, but also to challenge them into thinking more critically about familiar issues.

The potency of this community-based approach to documentary lies in the fact that the challenges and opportunities faced by the community are articulated entirely through the words of the community members themselves. As a communicative event, therefore, it is radically different from a talk delivered by an outside "expert," even if that expert were to identify similar challenges and opportunities. That said, the researcher's voice is also present: through her role in analyzing and editing footage, she becomes an invisible narrator. The narratives represented in the documentary are really cocreations of community members and researchers (Harper et al. 2004). The invisibility of the editing process makes the documentary a powerful vehicle for message delivery, but also a medium ripe for propagandistic distortion. To ensure that they have represented the community fairly, both the story's characters and narrators must be subject to critique.

2.8. Putting landscape change information into local discursive context: using ethnographic data to inform geospatial analyses.

The foregoing IPRM steps were designed to study and represent the ways in which community members express their views on landscape change. Representing landscape change itself is a distinct but related undertaking. This latter track of IPRM is primarily the subject of Carla Norwood's doctoral research, but I will briefly describe how it intersected with my own work.

The scientific analysis and representation of landscape change draws upon its own repertoire of discourses and communicative genres. Land use/land cover (LULC) change

research is customarily presented through the production of academic texts—e.g. maps, journal articles, conference papers—that reflect the assumptions of the discourses within which they were conceived and the conventions of the genres they employ. The former include assumptions about the authors' claims to authority, assumptions about the nature and bounds of the reality they are describing, and assumptions about their audience's rhetorical competencies. The latter include conventions regarding the appropriate use of words and other symbols, as well as the conceptual and visual arrangement of those symbols. Competent participation in such academic discourses requires specialized knowledge, and consequently excludes everyone who lacks this knowledge. This makes it difficult to communicate even across academic disciplines (Wear 1999), let alone with the "lay" public.

Because of its discursive exclusivity, LULC change research has not achieved broad relevance with regard to community discussions about land-use decision-making (Couclelis 2005). This does not necessarily reflect a lack of public interest in landscape change information; on the contrary, many community members express intense interest in such information. Rather, it reflects a failure of communication. This failure is particularly evident in Macon County, which is home to Coweeta Hydrologic Lab, a research station of the United States Forest Service. Coweeta is a world-renowned center of LULC research, where numerous scholars have come to train or conduct studies (e.g. Bolstad and Swank 1997; Burcher and Benfield 2006; Burcher, Valett, and Benfield 2007; Gragson and Bolstad 2006; Wear, Turner, and Flamm 1996). Despite the fact that much of this research focuses on the ecological effects of various land uses in the Southern Appalachian landscape, it has had no apparent effect on the development of

land-use policies in Macon County—a disconnect that Norwood and I have termed the "Macon paradox."

In order to be relevant to community discussions of landscape change, it follows that LULC change research should be informed by community ecological discourses. In LTP, we accomplished this by using community input to guide the analysis and presentation of landscape change information. The project team initially decided what landscape change data should be collected and analyzed. Themes and concerns expressed in the ethnographic interviews then informed further data collection, analysis, and presentation. Based on these inputs, Norwood was able to produce graphical presentations of locally-relevant landscape change trends in ways that were designed to be legible to community members. These presentations were then refined through subsequent community feedback.

2.9. Refining data presentation: feedback from community partners and focus groups

The POL documentaries were presented directly to the public. In LTP, however, the documentary and landscape change data were first refined through structured feedback from community members, solicited either individually or in small groups. Community partners themselves can provide valuable comments, but it is also helpful to seek input from community members who have not thus far been involved in the project. The draft data presentation (including both the documentary and the landscape change information) can be regarded as reflecting hypotheses about what narratives and information will be viewed as most relevant in the community; in effect, it is based on a

working model of how the community socially constructs landscape change. A first step toward corroborating this model is to test it on a population not used to develop it, which the LTP team accomplished through focus groups.

Langford and McDonagh define a focus group as "a carefully planned discussion, designed to obtain the perceptions of the group members on a defined area of interest" (2003: 2). Most well known in the context of market research, focus groups are also used in a wide range of social science fields (Langford and McDonagh 2003). The group consists of a small number of participants (we have found a group of five or six to work well), plus facilitators (we have used a two-person facilitation team, including a moderator and a recorder/assistant). For the LTP focus groups, we sought participants who had not been previously involved in the project, so we could not employ the same social networks that had been used to identify interviewees. For this reason, it proved more appropriate for outside researchers, rather than community members, to take the lead in recruiting participants. Our recruitment strategies included flyers, newspaper advertisements, and face-to-face solicitation. We offered $25 (plus refreshments) as an inducement for participation in a two-hour session.

The project team used focus groups to help refine the data presentation in multiple ways. In some cases, the moderator presented elements of the draft presentation to the participants and asked for feedback. Alternately, the moderator prompted the participants to share their views on an issue in order to see whether or not those views supported the working hypotheses. The intensive, controlled environment of the focus groups allowed for the use of varied data-collection techniques: for example, we used aerial photographs

and maps as bases for participatory mapping exercises (Jackson, Nurse, and Singh 1994, Mather et al. 1998) wherein participants identified special places in the landscape.[12]

2.10. Effecting discursive intervention: public meetings

Public meetings were the critical moments of discursive intervention at which the project teams presented their work back to the community. In effect, each team was an artist that, having painted a portrait of a patron, was now showing the portrait to the patron for the first time. Does the patron recognize himself in the portrait? Does he like the way he has been represented? Does the portrait enable him to see himself in new ways? The artist wants answers to these questions. Getting feedback on the project team's work was only the initial goal of the meetings, however. The ultimate goal was to begin a civic conversation through which community members articulated their own responses to the questions and issues raised by the presentation, thereby extending and broadening the project narratives. The following procedure for achieving these goals was implemented in LTP, based on lessons learned from POL.

Multiple meetings were scheduled for different dates and locations in order to reach a variety of audiences. They were held on weekday evenings, but not on Wednesday, when community members were likely to attend church events. Each meeting should be widely publicized through the media, mailings, flyers, and any other means available. We held a press event in advance of the public meetings, so reporters could preview the presentation and provide enhanced coverage. We also provided food at the meetings in order to boost attendance and foster a convivial atmosphere.

[12] Margaret Browne, a doctoral student in the UNC Department of City and Regional Planning, took a lead role in designing and carrying out the LTP focus groups.

Planning the meeting program involved determining the most appropriate roles for community partners and outside researchers. The partners, not the researchers, "hosted" the meetings, since they had the local credibility to do so. In playing host and welcoming everyone to the event, they conveyed to the meeting attendees that this research had their sanction and that they trusted the researchers. However, the outside researchers were the ones who described the research process and analyses. This afforded the partners a measure of distance from the presentation itself; the researchers were implicitly setting themselves up to take the blame for problems with the research. After all, the social consequences of unpopularity were relatively low for the researchers, since they did not live in the community full-time. At the same time, fostering an association between the researchers and the research served to bolster the presentation's credibility with the audience: while the community partners might be assumed to be distorting the findings to promote their known agenda, researchers are likely to be regarded as less embroiled in local politics and hence more "neutral" (a problematic assumption in its own right, as discussed earlier).

Overseeing the conduct of the meeting itself represented a distinct role: that of the meeting facilitator. Ideally, this role should be played by a trained facilitator who is not from the community—and therefore politically "neutral," again. However, she should be familiar enough with the area to be culturally competent. We enlisted facilitators to make sure that the meeting followed its intended course and stayed on schedule.

The presentation began with landscape change information, followed by the documentary. In this order, the landscape change presentation served to introduce critical

ways in which the area is changing, and then the documentary showed how community members are responding to those changes.

Herein lies the distinctive contribution that a documentary can make in setting the tone of the subsequent discussion. By presenting excerpts of interviews in a public meeting, a documentary is projecting one type of communicative event into another, very different one. The value of one-on-one interviews lies in their intimacy: in the course of an extended, semi-structured interview, participants typically wax reflective, sharing personal perspectives that they would not reveal in a public setting. IPRM interviewees are fully aware that some of their remarks will be presented publicly,[13] but generally this does not impede them from opening up. By contrast, the rhetorical conventions of public meetings usually lead participants to speak in a more action-oriented, authoritative voice. The characteristic communicative genre used in a meeting is *argument* (Fairclough 2003: 81), as speakers try to convince others of their position. The appearance of self-assurance is the norm; reflection and vulnerability are not.

Viewing the documentary, however, exposes meeting attendees to the personal reflections of fellow community members—many of whom they may know. This experience tacitly gives the audience permission to be reflective themselves, to speak in terms of values, and to employ the narrative genre. This is not to say that the meeting loses all of its pre-existing rhetorical characteristics: the orientation toward action remains, leading participants to feel that they should "decide on something" or "do something." These decisions and proposals, however, can now be grounded in personal

[13] Prior to each interview, the interviewer should go over a consent form with the interviewee and ask her to sign it. The consent form required for documentary ethnography differs from a typical social science consent, because it does not guarantee anonymity. On the contrary, it makes it clear that, in all likelihood, the interviewee's name, words, and image will all be part of a public presentation. The security of anonymity is sacrificed for the empowering potential of publicity.

experience, in the connection to place that is the ultimate motivation for action. An IPRM meeting can be seen, then, as a hybrid event that combines the rhetorical traits of the interview and the public meeting—resulting in a public conversation unlike any that most of its participants have previously had.[14]

In order to take best advantage of the meeting's hybrid rhetorical potential, the discussion period following the presentation was carefully structured. IPRM is designed in opposition to the public meeting model with which most community members are familiar: the public hearing. According to legally-prescribed hearing protocol, attendees must sign up to speak, one at a time, before the entire assembly (Cox 2006). This format has two profound consequences. First, it limits speakers to those who feel rhetorically confident and impassioned enough to address a large audience. As a result, grandstanding ideologues tend to dominate the debate. Second, it precludes meaningful dialogue, since participants cannot converse with one another. Instead, speaker after speaker makes his argument in isolation (Matthews 1994). Rather than engaging effectively with one another, these arguments are simply added to the tally: the number of speakers for the proposed action versus the number against. Indeed, since the government officials present typically do not respond to the speakers' comments, participants receive little assurance that their input will be taken into account at all

[14] I have found audio-visual documentary to be quite effective in simulating the immediacy of face-to-face dialogue; however, it is only that—a simulation. A video recording, which the audience watches passively, cannot capture the dynamism of unmediated speech. In order to stimulate participants' attention in the POL meetings, I suspended playback at each section break in the documentary and invited a community partner to provide some framing commentary for the upcoming section. Being addressed at regular intervals by a live speaker kept the audience from being lulled into passivity as they watched the video. I see live performance techniques ("performance ethnography" [Denzin 2003]) as holding considerable for stimulating public dialogue on land use issues; this would be a productive area for further research. I expect, however, that many community members who are comfortable being featured in a documentary would not feel comfortable participating in a live presentation: such an approach would be hampered by participants' hesitation to speak unguardedly in a public setting. The benefits of *in vivo* testimony would need to weighed against the costs.

(Matthews 1994). Most people are not comfortable speaking in this combative environment, so they merely join in group outbursts (applause and jeering) or sit in cowed silence. Indeed, since hearings have a well-deserved reputation as excruciating ordeals, most community members stay home. This leaves a small number of shrill extremists to exert disproportionate influence on the policy-making process.

More inclusive civic dialogue depends on establishing a discursive environment in which more community members can confidently and meaningfully participate. IPRM's approach to accomplishing this depends on small-group discussions. The value of small-group formats has been well documented by proponents of the Collaborative Learning approach to environmental policy-making (Daniels and Walker 2001). According to Cox (2006: 135), a core requirement of collaborative environmental decision-making is that "all participants have access to necessary resources and opportunities to participate in discussions." Ensuring that all voices are heard and respected is much more feasible in a group of six than a group of sixty. Ideas generated through a small-group process, therefore, can better represent the attitudes of all the participants.

The groundwork for small-group discussion must be laid before the meeting begins. For the LTP meetings, we arranged seating in groups of six around tables, rather than putting the chairs in rows. Seated in this arrangement, participants were already positioned for small group discussions, so the space did not have to be reconfigured after the presentation. A *small-group facilitator* was assigned to each table. These were community member volunteers, trained in advance, whose responsibility was to facilitate the discussion at their table and make sure that everyone was given opportunities to

speak. The involvement of familiar community members as small-group facilitators was another way to increase participants' comfort level and community ownership of the process.

Based on our experiences from POL and other public meetings on land-use issues, we determined that small group discussion should follow immediately upon the presentation, rather than being preceded by a full-group question-and-comment period. This point bears emphasizing because it is counterintuitive: after most presentations, the expectation is that the presenters will open the floor for questions and comments from the audience. In denying this impulse, the facilitator can initially seem to be repressing participation rather than fostering it. We have observed, however, that the first people to speak in open question/comment periods are likely to be the same kind of people who most often speak at hearings: individuals with confident, crystallized positions on an issue. These empowered speakers can exploit an open discussion period to expound on their positions, rather than responding to the foregoing presentation. As soon as someone blurts out a controversial argument, everyone becomes defensive again, and much of the reflective potential established by the documentary is lost. Instead, at the conclusion of the presentation the facilitator should immediately direct people into small group conversations.

The small group discussion protocol that we developed in LTP proceeded as follows. After everyone in her group had introduced himself, the small-group facilitator would begin by assigning two other roles: recorder and reporter. The recorder was responsible for writing down discussants' comments; the reporter was responsible for

sharing her group's ideas with the full group at the end of the exercise. By delegating these roles, we were further diversifying the voices represented in the process.

Figure 2.5. Small group discussion at a Little Tennessee Perspectives meeting held in Cowee community.

Then, the facilitator would guide her group through sequential discussion of three questions: *1. What was one thing from the presentation that particularly struck you? 2. What would you change about, or add to, the presentation? 3. What is your vision for the future of Macon County?* The first of these questions was the most open-ended—it served as an opportunity for participants to briefly identify the aspect of the presentation that they found most significant or interesting. An easy question to answer, it also represented a chance for the facilitator to solicit input from every group member, thus helping to rhetorically empower them all within the small group context. The second question was valuable to the project team, since it captured participant critiques of the presentation. The third question initiated a transition into thinking about what the community should do to address the issues raised in meeting thus far. While the particular questions used will vary from project to project, the overall arc of the discussion is broadly applicable: begin by reflecting on issues raised, then move on to considering how the community can tackle those issues.

While the recorder wrote down answers to the first two questions on a notepad, he wrote the answers to question three on a poster-sized sheet of paper. At the end of the

small-group discussion period, the reporter from each group carried the group's list of visions up to the front of the room and presented them to the full group. Each group's list was affixed to the wall beside the others. As more and more visions were added to the wall, patterns became visibly apparent; participants began to perceive which ideas were most broadly shared. Then and only then was the floor opened for full-group discussion, in which participants could build on the themes that had emerged from the preceding exercise.

Each meeting should conclude by pointing the way toward initiating collective action that responds to emergent themes from the discussion. The precise nature of this collective action may not yet be clear, but a next step should be decided upon—a date for a subsequent meeting, at least. Participants will leave the meeting feeling energized to address the issues that were raised; they should be offered some ways of directing that energy. Overseeing this transition to next steps is the responsibility of the community partners—it is they, not the outside researchers, who will carry the community capacity-building process forward.

Before they leave, meeting participants should fill out a written evaluation of the meeting. This will give the project team measurable feedback on each part of the public process that they led and the degree to which participants felt represented in it. Subsequently, the project team should prepare a report for the community that summarizes results from the meetings, including findings from the written evaluations. They should mail this report to each participant and disseminate it through local media.

Just as the documentary both drew upon existing community narratives and created new ones, the public meeting process both drew upon an existing community and

created a new one. The meetings were designed to build solidarity among participants and challenge assumed divisions within the community—making them a powerful venue for conflict resolution. In the documentary and in the discussions, participants have opportunities to hear from their fellow community members in new ways. Disagreements are made apparent, but so are commonalities—and the latter are likely to be more surprising, since they are less frequently expressed in public. Several participants told me that they had previously harbored a negative preconception of a fellow community member, but that their minds had been changed by something that person said in the documentary. Ideally, community members will leave a meeting with a heightened feeling of common cause and increased confidence in their ability to effect change together.

2.11. Participatory evaluation: assessing outcomes and resituating the initiative

The public meetings represented the last point at which the project teams had any measure of direct "control" over our intervention—it then became part of the community's discursive life. Meeting participants and the media disseminated their impressions of the project to other community members, and conversations begun at the meetings were carried forward in new contexts and directions. The "optimistic goal" of each project was to help launch an ongoing CBNRM initiative, and the community partners continued to work on moving these initiatives forward, but the exact form they took could not be entirely predicted.

Undertaking an evaluation of a project after the completion of a public participation process can help the project team figure out how to direct their next efforts.

As Israel *et al.* (2005) have noted, evaluation should be regarded as an integral part of participatory research. Indeed, this final evaluative process is simply another iteration in the adaptive IPRM approach. This time, the questions driving the evaluation are: *Did the project help enhance community capacity to address landscape change?* and *How could it continue to do so?* In terms of discourse, answering these questions involves assessing the ongoing saliency of project narratives in the community at large: *Have the narratives introduced through the project been used to motivate collective resource management action thus far?* and *Which narratives have the greatest latent potential to do so?*

Assessing the project's impacts since the public meetings is a matter of tracking events in the community over that time period. Community partners, who continue to be directly involved in these events, are themselves the most readily available source of information. Analyzing media stories and other available records is also useful. Some discursive impacts of the project may be readily identifiable: a participant in a subsequent action may directly credit the project, or a concept introduced by the project may be employed. Other discursive shifts are subtler.

Perhaps the clearest way to perceive changes in a community discourse is at its "boundaries." As discussed in Chapter One, a discourse can be understood in Foucaultian terms as delimiting the universe of legitimate perspectives on a subject. In other words, discourse bounds the possible. Resource management strategies that fall outside a community discourse will not enter the realm of possibility for the members of that community, so they will not be used there. In evaluating POL/LTP, then, the project teams reflected on whether the boundaries of the possible had expanded at all since the public meetings. Had community members considered or attempted collective actions

that they previously had not, and if so, did the intervention contribute to this change? Chains of discursive events had to be traced backwards through time.

Establishing the potential of project narratives to help promote further, broader collective action also involves testing discursive boundaries, this time through another round of model corroboration. After analyzing the results of the POL/LTP public meetings, the project team could make reasonably confident claims about the narratives that were most salient to project participants. We could not yet say, however, how salient these narratives were among community members at large. Representativity is an issue that every PR project must face: how accurately does the project reflect the diversity of views in the community it purports to represent (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Hayward, Simpson, and Wood 2004)? In seeking to discredit a project, a critic could argue—with some justification—that the individuals who participated in the project are unrepresentative of the population as a whole. After all, the participants were people who were motivated to take part—what about those without such a strong interest in or awareness of land-use issues, and those who did not feel empowered to attend the meetings? To counter such criticisms, the project team again attempted to expand its data pool by reaching out to non-participants.

POL/LTP project teams have used both focus groups and a survey instrument to study representativity. Each approach has its advantages. Only a sample survey offers the possibility of collecting input from a statistically random subset of the population. On the other hand, project elements can be more closely replicated and more thoroughly explored in focus groups. Ultimately, the choice of methodology rests with each project team. Bear in mind that even if a research instrument—a survey, for example—is not

highly participatory, it can still be part of a participatory evaluation process. Sometimes a less participatory instrument is what community partners want in order to bolster a project's reputation in the community. The methodology and results of the POL/LTP evaluation process are detailed in Chapter Five.

By gauging the ongoing relevance of project narratives, the evaluation process should enable community partners to reposition subsequent CBNRM efforts. Evaluation is not so much a conclusion, then, as a new beginning. Insights gained can also contribute to dialogues with other communities, as discussed below.

2.12. "Scaling up:" fostering dialogues among communities

When multiple communities undertake discursive CBNRM initiatives, there is potential to further expand these initiatives through inter-community dialogue. Project teams from different communities can compare notes on their strategic successes and failures. These dialogues can expose participants to alternate discursive articulations from other communities. They can then relay these insights back to their home communities, where they can inform subsequent capacity-building endeavors.

Like a community project, inter-community dialogue brings different narratives together—thereby once again illuminating both conflicts and commonalities. The commonalities can become the basis of larger-scale campaigns to address issues of shared concern. In this way, community initiatives can potentially become the building blocks of a bottom-up approach to environmental policy-making.

Box 2.2. Initiating regional dialogue: *Rural Voices and Visions*.

Rural Voices and Visions, an exhibit held at Charlotte's Levine Museum of the New South in 2004-05, was an initial attempt to foster dialogue among the communities that participated in POL and citizens of the region at large. Using interview excerpts, photographs, and documentary footage, the exhibit focused on distinctive narratives from each community, thereby highlighting the diversity of rich connections between the region's landscape and its people.

The exhibit opened with a panel discussion featuring partners from different communities. An associated juried art exhibition featured works by regional artists that responded to themes from *Rural Voices*.

Now we hope that the exhibit can travel to a venue in each of the POL communities, so that community members can see their own narratives in regional context.

Figure 2.6. Visitors view the *Rural Voices* exhibit.

Figure 2.7. Panel discussion, *Rural Voices* opening.

2.13. Conclusion

The iterative participatory research model (IPRM) that I have described here represents a widely-applicable means of identifying communities' discursive resources for collectively addressing landscape change. From a research perspective, a consistent approach can facilitate comparison across cases, thereby enabling broader methodological and theoretical advances. From a community empowerment perspective, it can enable communities to benefit from each other's experiences as they each seek to narrate their own ecological futures.

In the subsequent two chapters, I will review the results of the projects through which IPRM was developed, *Perspectives on Land* and *Little Tennessee Perspectives*.

Chapter 3

PERSPECTIVES ON LAND: CO-CREATING COMMUNITY NARRATIVES IN THE NORTH CAROLINA PIEDMONT

3.1. Introduction

On the afternoon of December 6, 2003, thirty people were gathered in the Ophir Community Center, a squat cinder-brick building in the rolling Uwharrie hills of Montgomery County, North Carolina. They had watched a video documentary about their community, which I had produced in collaboration with Ruth Ann Grissom, Bobby Hall, and other local partners. Community members, many of whom were seated in the room, were featured in the documentary, expressing the personal connections they felt with the Uwharries area. After the video presentation, the meeting attendees had discussed their reactions and views in small groups. Now the full group had reconvened to share thoughts that had arisen during the preceding small-group discussions.

A middle-aged woman sitting by the wall began to speak (see Figure 3.23). Her mother had suffered from a protracted illness, she explained. As her mother's caretaker, she had struggled to cover the mounting medical expenses, and her greatest worry was that she would have to sell the family land. "If you're from Ophir," she declared, "you don't sell your land. You pass it down to your kids!" Her voice cracked as she continued: "my children… they come here, and they love the river, and they don't want

to see it change. And I don't either!" When the woman finished speaking, there was a long silence. The passionate love of place and the gut-wrenching fear of loss were palpable in the room.

The goal of the *Perspectives on Land* project (POL) was, in a sense, to create discursive spaces in North Carolina's rural Piedmont where changing landscapes could be discussed with this kind of emotional honesty. At the Uwharrie community meeting described above, the documentary and small-group discussion had laid the groundwork for the ensuing open reflection, because they had established a precedent of speaking in terms of *ecological values*. These values, which underlie the connection between rural people and their local environments, are deeply-held but rarely voiced in public.

My research explores the potential of *narrative* to elucidate values that can motivate community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) initiatives. As I discussed in Chapter One, narrative can be understood as the way in which people locate themselves as discursive subjects (Hajer 1995). Listening to and telling stories engages people on an intellectual and emotional level, thus helping them to clarify their own positions on complex issues (Satterfield and Slovic 1994). While each individual has stories that reflect his personal experiences, members of a community also tell collective stories, or narratives, about themselves (Rappaport 2000).

The process of elaborating individual stories and community narratives can take place simultaneously, as the foregoing example illustrates. The story of the woman at the Uwharrie meeting was very personal; however, by telling it at the meeting, she was also elaborating the community's narrative about itself. This dual discursive function is illustrated by the assertion that "if you're from Ophir, you don't sell you land"—at that

moment, she was speaking not only for herself, but for the people of the area. This is how community narratives were *co-created* in POL: through the intersection of many individual stories. The result, we hoped, would be narratives with enough local resonance to help catalyze collective action.

This chapter takes multiple approaches to examining narratives that emerged in the course of conducting POL research. First, I will recount the narrative of how the project itself unfolded, drawing upon my own experiences. Then I will characterize and compare the collective narratives that were co-created in each community. Finally, I will explore the "landscape ecology" of discourse: variations in narrative that are observable across the project's "discursive landscape," as well as across the biophysical landscape of the study region. In addressing the latter part of this question, correspondences will be tested between project narratives and the regional narrative of landscape change gleaned from spatial and demographic data.

3.2. *Perspectives on Land*: story of a participatory research project

My personal story of the *Perspectives on Land* project is like any other narrative: in recapitulating a series of events, it endows them with a sense of purpose that they did not originally possess. This story serves an appropriate introduction to *Perspectives on Land*, because it reveals some of the values and intentions that I brought to the project and how those evolved in interaction with the values and intentions of others.

The story could begin at a number of different points, but ultimately I trace its origins back to the late eighteenth century, when my ancestors began arriving in the North Carolina Piedmont. Scotch-Irish immigrants with names such as Patterson and

Potts, they traveled inland from the port at Charleston or down the Great Wagon Road from New Jersey. Some settled near the Catawba River in Mecklenburg County, where they have lived ever since. Though I grew up in South Carolina, I frequently visited my grandparents in Mecklenburg County as a child. While I was in college, my parents decided to move back to Davidson, the northern Mecklenburg town where my father had grown up. It was no accident, then, that I ended up studying the connections between people and the land in North Carolina's Southern Piedmont region: my identity was shaped in part by those same connections. Witnessing the widespread changes that are now sweeping across the Piedmont is a viscerally wrenching experience for me, and for as long as I can remember I have wanted to help protect the ecological integrity and beauty of that landscape.

When I was growing up, I felt sure that many Piedmont families, not just my own, felt profoundly tied to their local landscapes: why else would they stay in the same place for generation upon generation, weathering shifting economic forces? However, these place-based values usually seemed to be curiously absent from policy debates. The "environment," in particular, was characteristically discussed in dry, abstract terms, leading many rural Carolinians to dismiss environmental concerns as the fabrications of out-of-touch, liberal, urban elites. But wasn't this environment also the home that these same rural residents would never consider forsaking? I felt compelled to try to uncover the continuities that existed, or could be established, between the "place" that rural people love and the "environment" that can be protected through policy.

I began to formally study the connections between the Piedmont environment and the values of its human denizens in the summer of 1998, when I was a rising junior at

Swarthmore College. I was majoring in Religion, which I saw as a way of interrogating deeply-held beliefs in different cultures about how to be an ethical human in the world. Accordingly, I designed and conducted a research project for Catawba Lands Conservancy (the Charlotte-based land trust) that explored the relationships between religious and environmental values among the members of four local church congregations. The project—entitled *Values and Land Use in Mecklenburg, Iredell, and Catawba Counties of North Carolina*—relied upon audio-recorded interviews and photographs with ministers and parishioners, as well as a written questionnaire—methods that anticipated my subsequent research.

During my remaining years at Swarthmore, I continued to refine these questions and methods, but in a much more distant cultural context: northern Thailand. My Thai research experience, which was the basis of my undergraduate thesis, brought into vivid relief the powerful role of cultural difference in shaping perceptions of the environment. At the same time, I was able to begin refining theoretical and methodological approaches that could prove robust across a range of socio-cultural and biophysical settings.

After graduating in 2000, I moved back to Davidson. In early 2001, I was contacted by Jeff Michael, Executive Director of the LandTrust for Central North Carolina in Salisbury. Michael was familiar with my work from the *Values and Land Use* project, and he proposed that a similar project be conducted in the Uwharries area of the state. We agreed on the merits of such an undertaking, but funding would have to be secured. Shortly thereafter, Ron Altmann, Executive Director of Catawba Lands Conservancy, offered me a position as Community Outreach/Program Assistant with his

organization. I accepted the job, with the condition that I would still be able to work on a project of the kind Michael had proposed.

Together, Altmann, Michael, and I conceived *Perspectives on Land*, a community outreach initiative that would encompass not only the Uwharries, but also three other communities in the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina. Two of the communities would be located in the Catawba river basin, while the other two would be located in the Yadkin-Pee Dee river basin—the service areas of Catawba Lands Conservancy and the LandTrust for Central North Carolina, respectively. We selected four communities—Stanley Creek in Gaston County, eastern Catawba County, western Rowan County, and the Uwharries (see Figure 3.1)—based on the conservation interest that they held for the land trusts, their differing distances from Charlotte, and their differing landscapes (see Figure 3.2).

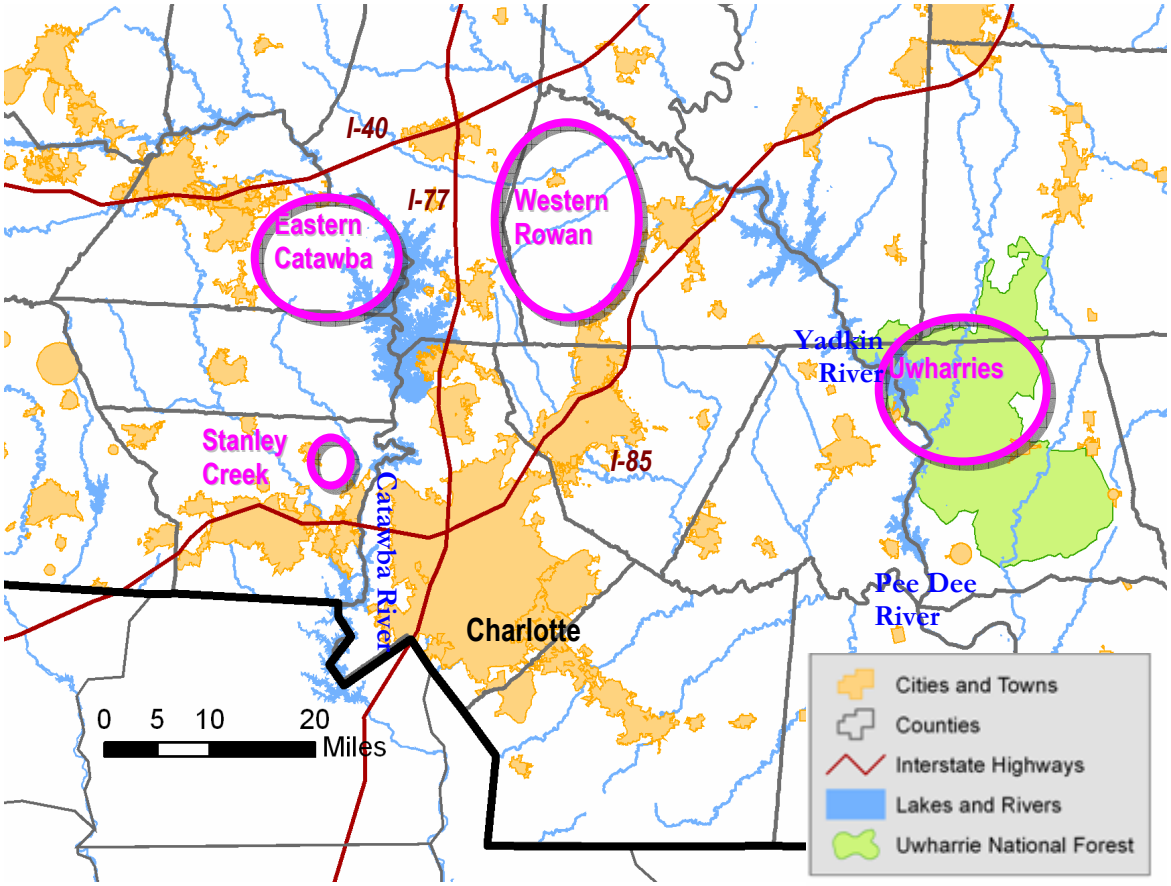


Figure 3.1. Map of North Carolina's southern Piedmont region. POL project sites are circled.

POL was conceived as a new kind of land trust community outreach that would draw upon my ethnographic research background. Altmann, Michael, and I outlined the general approach, which evolved into the research methodology detailed in Chapter Two. I would work with local partners to document, through interviews and photography, the connections between people and the land in each project community. The resulting documents would hopefully help the land trusts to more effectively engage rural residents in conservation activities—a goal that the organizations, and conservation advocates generally, had thus far largely failed to achieve (see Section 1.3).

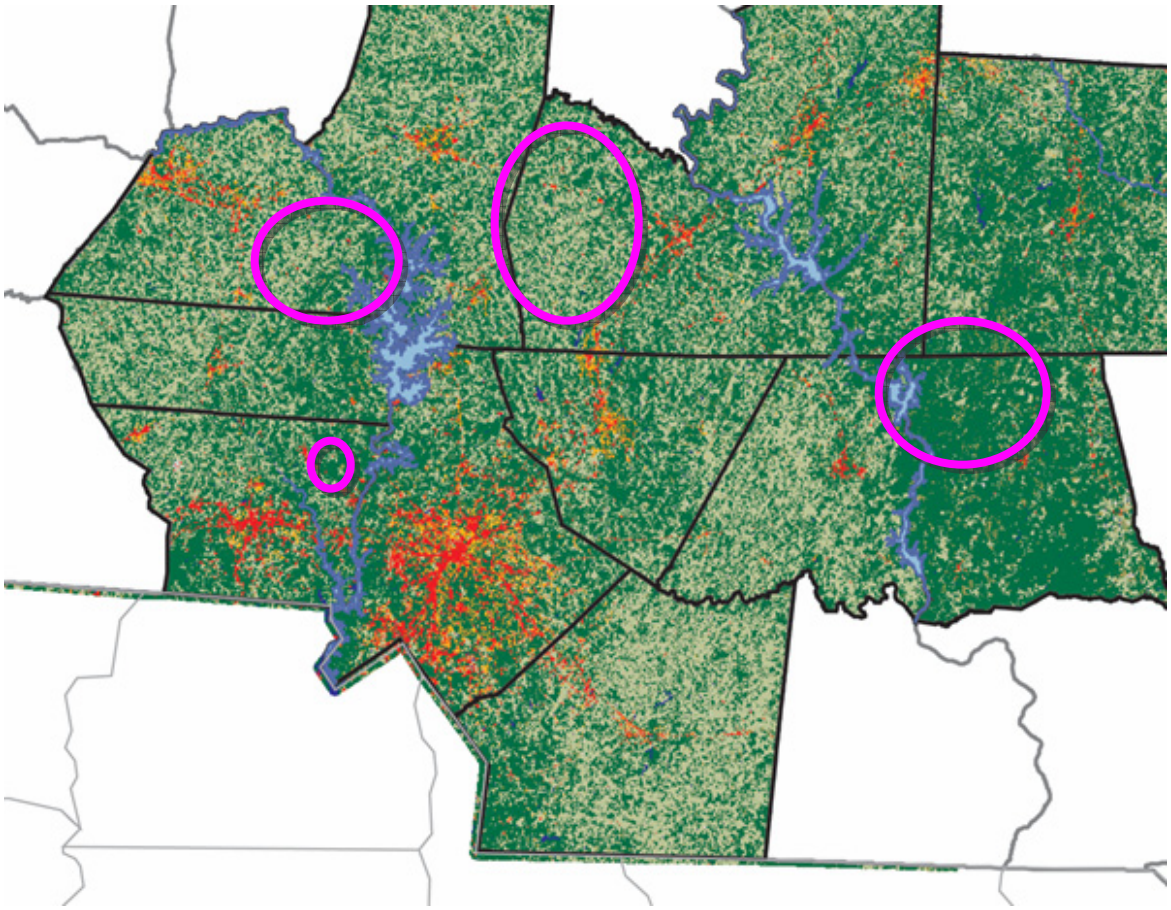


Figure 3.2. Land cover, POL project region. Red = high-intensity development, orange = low-intensity development, light green = open/agricultural, dark green = forested, blue = water. POL project sites are circled. Data: LandSat TM scenes, 1996. Source: NC CGIA/NC Corporate Geographic Database.

Altmann, Michael, and I agreed that, once funding was raised, I would devote thirty percent of my hours to POL. The rest of the time, I would work on more "conventional" community outreach programs for Catawba Lands Conservancy: producing the newsletter, planning events, speaking at Rotary Club meetings, and the like. In effect, all of these efforts relied on established techniques to target existing conservation constituencies; POL, by contrast, sought to discover or create new constituencies. For a small non-profit organization, dedicating substantial staff time to an "exploratory" outreach initiative with unknown returns was a bold choice, and I have

always appreciated the long-term vision that Altmann displayed through his unwavering support for the project.

Having secured initial funding from the North Carolina Humanities Council and a private donor, I began project fieldwork in the fall of 2001. Typically, my initial contacts in each community were individuals known to the land trusts because of their previous involvement or known interest in conservation initiatives. I met with each of these prospective community partners to discuss how a project might be effectively undertaken in their communities. These conversations involved determining what all parties involved—the land trust, the community partner, and the community at large—could get out of the project. Together, my initial community partners and I designed a project to "fit" each community and respond to our respective agendas. As discussed in Section 2.3, the particular perspectives and roles of each partner had a determinative effect on the participants involved, issues addressed, and outcomes achieved by each project; partners provided the lens through which I viewed each community.

As I began working with my community partners to carry out POL fieldwork, I became increasingly aware that the questions and issues raised by this initiative would extend beyond my mandate from the sponsoring land trusts. Rather than simply being an outreach campaign of those organizations, POL had the potential to catalyze community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) initiatives in the participating communities. In order to realize this transformative potential, I realized that I would need to be open to the full range of visions that community members might express, even if these were not consistent with the land trusts' mission. Indeed, POL's community-

based methodology itself represented an implicit critique of mainstream conservation practice.

This desire to broaden my scope of inquiry led me to reframe POL as an academic research project: I enrolled in the UNC Chapel Hill Curriculum in Ecology in the fall of 2002, and POL became the first phase of my dissertation research. In an academic context, POL constituted *participatory research* (PR). CBNRM was both the subject and the method of this PR project: I sought to study ways of building community resource-management capacity by actually endeavoring to start building that capacity.

I recount the specific evolution of each community project below. Throughout this chapter, I will generally cover the four project communities in the following order: 1) Stanley Creek, 2) Eastern Catawba County, 3) Western Rowan County, and 4) Uwharries. I have chosen this order because it represents a trajectory of increasing distance from Charlotte and a progression along an urban-rural landscape gradient (see Section 3.5.2)

3.2.1. Stanley Creek

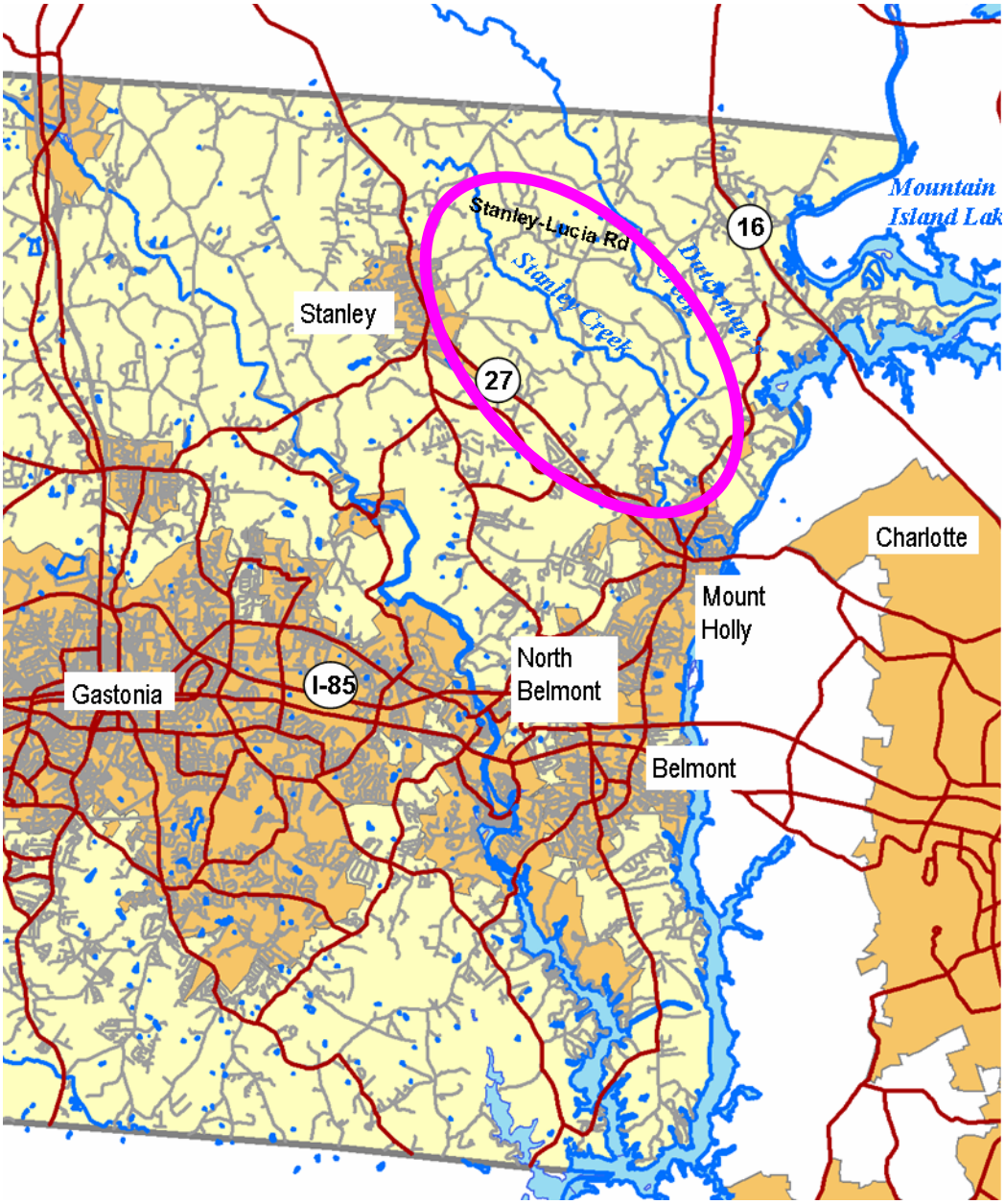


Figure 3.3. Location of Stanley Creek community project, eastern Gaston County. Project site is outlined in pink.

Encompassing just a portion of northeastern Gaston County, Stanley Creek (Figure 3.3) is by far the smallest of the four project sites: 11.93 square miles, as delineated by the census blocks I have used for demographic calculations (US Census 2004; see Box 2.1 for discussion of this size difference). Located in the watershed of the

eponymous creek, the Stanley Creek community comprises the swath of rural land separating the towns of Stanley and Mount Holly—and is socially distinct from both, according to local residents. Stanley Creek was also the site with which the land trusts had already been most closely involved prior to the beginning of POL: Catawba Lands Conservancy had already worked with several local landowners to protect their properties. As I will discuss further subsequently (see Section 3.4.1), aspects of Stanley Creek's biophysical and discursive landscape had proven particularly compatible with existing private land conservation strategies. As it turned out, both of my community partners in Stanley Creek would be landowners who had placed conservation easements[15] on their property with Catawba Lands Conservancy.

Figure 3.4. Richard Rankin on his family's ancestral property.

My initial Stanley Creek partner, Richard Rankin (Figure 3.4), was particularly intimately associated with the Conservancy—he was a member of the organization's board and its past president. The Head of Gaston Day School, Rankin had conducted his own study of environmental narrative: he had edited a collection of North Carolina nature writing (1996). He also had deep family roots in Stanley Creek, dating back to King's Grant that deeded property to his ancestor, Samuel

[15] *Conservation easement:* a legal agreement between a property owner and a governmental or non-profit entity (in this case, Catawba Lands Conservancy) that permanently restricts development on that property. The owner retains title to the land itself, and is free to sell it. However, by placing an easement, he has effectively donated or sold the development rights to the property. The Conservancy permanently retains those rights but does not use them—meaning that the property can never be developed (e.g. subdivided into lots for houses or businesses), even when it changes hands. Typically, the easement contract allows for certain uses to continue, such as farming, forestry, or building additional structures in designated locations (see Small 1998).

Rankin. A remnant of this original property is still in the family, and Rankin had protected it with a permanent conservation easement. Rankin was happy to offer guidance on the project, but he was too busy to be involved further in the fieldwork.

Figure 3.5. Joyce Burt in her backyard with a rare bigleaf magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) tree.

Rankin and I came up with an initial list of other local residents to interview, one of whom was Joyce Burt **(**Figure 3.5). She, her husband, and her brother had also placed a conservation easement on their family land. Burt is the most notable example of a community partner whom I identified through interviewing. Having interviewed her, I asked whether she herself might be interested in conducting some interviews with fellow Stanley Creek residents. She said that she would, and she continued on to largely coordinate the remainder of the project, conducting the majority of the interviews and planning the community meeting. Burt's interviews provided me with a good opportunity to compare my own interviewing style with that of a community member (see Sections 2.6.1 and 3.3.5).

Box 3.1. On the spatial scaling of community.

The differences among the spatial sizes of the four community project sites reflect the subjectivity of mapping a social phenomenon such as *community* onto the biophysical landscape. The delineation of POL project communities reflects the definition of that I articulated in Section 1.5.3: *community* is *the set of people who share a mutually-acknowledged connection to a mutually-recognized place or landscape*. Community, seen in this way, is defined by its members, and it is they who delineate its boundaries. The spatial extent of each POL community, then, was refined over the course of the project.

Since POL focuses on self-identified "rural" communities, the scaling of the project communities can be seen as reflecting the scaling of rural identity in each area. In Eastern Catawba County and Western Rowan County, the project area that the land trusts and I originally identified was only a sub-section of the eventual area covered. Early interviewees in each of those projects repeatedly recommended interviewee prospects who lived in rural locales outside the initial project area, an indication that the rural social networks and senses of identity in these communities extended further than we had initially realized.

The Stanley Creek area of Gaston County, by contrast, seemed fairly well-contained—no one suggested that we expand our project area beyond the immediate vicinity. Residents of Stanley Creek did not appear to see themselves as part of a broader rural landscape and community. This could be a reflection of greater insularity in this community, perhaps in response to the urbanization of the surrounding landscape.

This willingness to contribute reflects Burt's exceptional personal commitment to environmental protection. A tireless advocate of land conservation, she saw the project as an opportunity to advance Catawba Lands Conservancy's work in the community. Burt has a thorough knowledge of native plants in the area and is involved in efforts to protect them, and she keeps a vigilant watch for wastewater contamination in the stream. The conservation easement donation is probably the greatest testament to her personal generosity, since it represents a drastic reduction in the monetary value of her family's only property. I was fortunate to have found such a dedicated partner.

The Stanley Creek Community Meeting (Figure 3.6) was held on September 20, 2003 at Burt's church, the First Presbyterian Church in Stanley. This was the first POL community meeting, and as such was my first opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of the research model. Burt, whose publicity efforts had attracted most of the thirty community members present, also played a decisive role in the proceedings: she welcomed the attendees and provided commentary during the presentation of the

documentary. The latter took place as follows. The documentary was organized into thematic sections, following the general narrative arc that we used in all the projects: 1) reasons why interviewees valued living in the community, 2) reactions to landscape changes that were taking place, and 3) visions for the future. At each section break, I would interrupt the playback, and Burt would briefly comment on the upcoming theme from her own perspective. This technique, which was also employed in the Eastern Catawba and Western Rowan meetings, had two functions: 1) it gave the community partner more control over the framing of the documentary, and 2) it broke up the video presentation into shorter segments in order to hold the audience's attention.

Figure 3.6. Stanley Creek community meeting. Photo by Kyra Weinkle.

The meeting was also very much a Catawba Lands Conservancy event. At each POL community meeting, the sponsoring land trust gave a presentation before the documentary screening. The Conservancy's work was promoted particularly heavily in Stanley Creek, however: not only in a presentation by Conservancy staffer Sonia Perillo, but in opening remarks by Rankin and in Burt's commentary. Moreover, many of the attendees were associated with or supporters of the organization. As a result, private land conservation was assumed by many participants to be the desired management

outcome—an assumption that was not so prevalent in communities further outside the land trusts' established sphere of influence.

The presentation was followed by small-group discussions, which were facilitated by volunteers at each table. Then each group reported back to the full assembly, and the floor was opened for further comment. This meeting clearly suggested that combining a documentary screening with subsequent small group discussion could lead to a powerful experience for participants. By the time the attendees had emerged from the small groups, the energy in the room had palpably increased. Most participants seemed quite engaged and interested in keeping the conversation going. Rankin reported that discussants at his table had recommended forming a Stanley Creek community association to advocate for the community's interests, including the protection of both natural and cultural heritage. At the end of the meeting, one of the attendees (who had also been interviewed for the documentary) came up to me. "Thank you for what you have done for this community," she said.

The Stanley Creek community meeting left me feeling that I had underestimated the potential of this research process. I was impressed by how readily the attendees related to the narratives presented in the documentary, and how easily they transitioned from reflecting on those narratives to discussing action steps. The idea of forming a community association was an unprompted upwelling of collective initiative that I had not anticipated. Overall, I was struck by the degree to which Stanley Creek residents really seemed to want this kind of gathering. Bringing a group of neighbors into a room to talk about the place where they live had seemed to be a perhaps overly-simple approach, but it was apparently unprecedented in this community.

3.2.2. Eastern Catawba

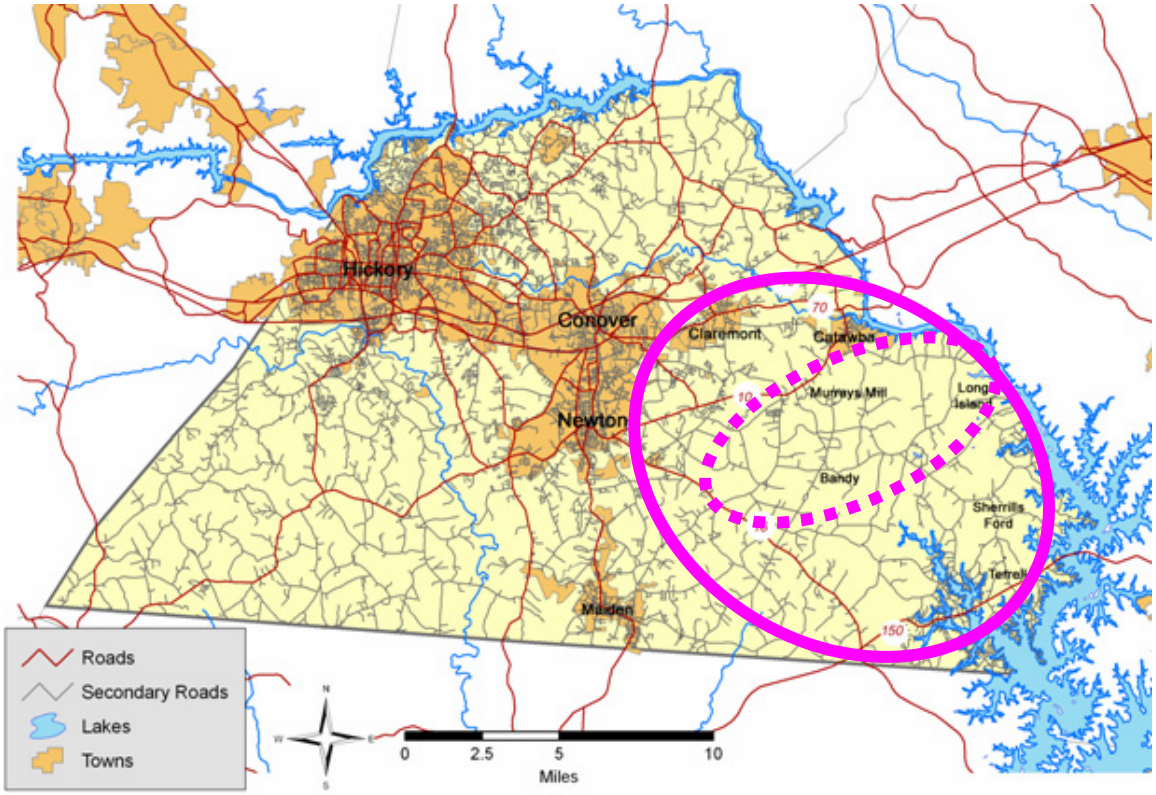


Figure 3.7. Catawba County. Dotted pink line delineates original project site (Balls Creek watershed). Solid line delineates expanded project site.

Altmann and I had originally identified the Balls Creek watershed in Catawba County as a potential project site. However, upon beginning to establish contacts in the area, it quickly became evident that local social networks extended throughout the eastern part of the county (Figure 3.7). As it turns out, long-term (white) residents of eastern Catawba—or "East of Newton," as it is sometimes called—share a distinct sense of cultural heritage: the original European settlers in the area had been Scotch-Irish, while those in the western part of the county were German. This divide is also reflected in electoral politics: the east has traditionally voted Republican, while the west has supported Democrats, noted community

partner Robert Eades. At the same time, the population of eastern Catawba is large and diverse, so I relied upon a variety of partners and approaches in order to recruit participants.

My initial community partner in Eastern Catawba was Paul Beatty, Jr. (Figure 3.8), an engineer at Duke Energy. Descended from some of the area's first settlers, Beatty is passionately committed to preserving the cultural and natural heritage of eastern Catawba—specifically the Ball's Creek watershed, and more specifically the Murray's Mill Historic Site, which features a working grist mill. Beatty saw the project as an opportunity to create more local opportunities for conservation by initiating a community conversation that included Catawba Lands Conservancy. The project also coincided with an ongoing Small Area Planning process in Catawba County, which included the development of plans for the Balls Creek and Sherrills Ford areas of eastern Catawba. Beatty and other community members were involved in this process, and they saw POL as a complementary endeavor.

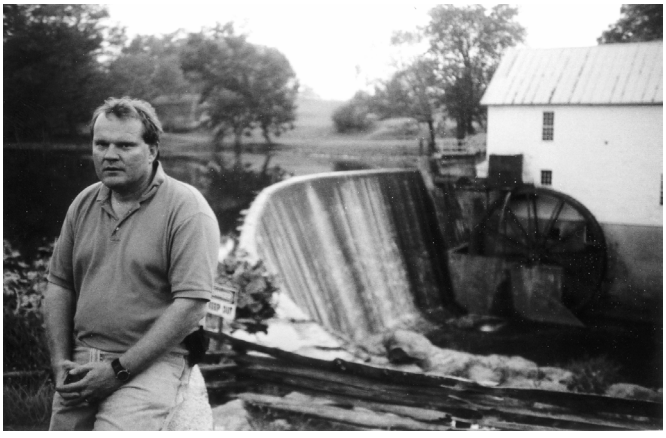


Figure 3.8. Paul Beatty at Murray's Mill Historic Site on Balls Creek.

Through conversations with Beatty, it soon became clear that the most efficient way of identifying interviewees in eastern Catawba, at least among the long-term

residents of the area, would be to spend some time at camp meeting. As discussed in Section 2.5.3, the institution of camp meeting is culturally central in this community and a modified project design was warranted to accommodate it. Since camp meeting only takes place during late August and early September, the beginning of fieldwork for the project was timed accordingly. During that time period, community partners and I spent several weeknights and evenings at the three area campgrounds: Ball's Creek, McKenzie's Grove, and Mott's Grove. In addition to documenting the events themselves through photographs and audio recording, I collected contact information from interviewee prospects.

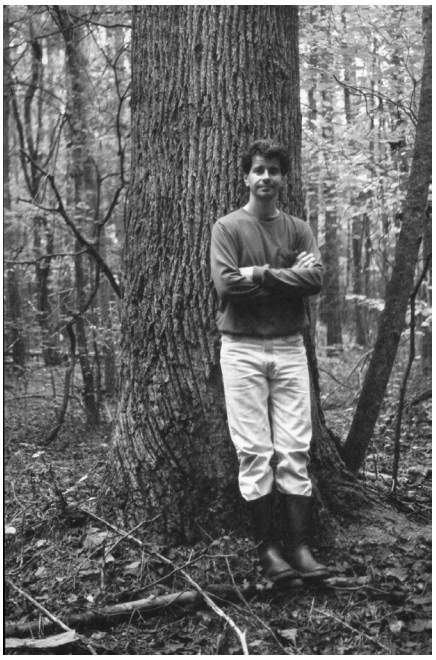
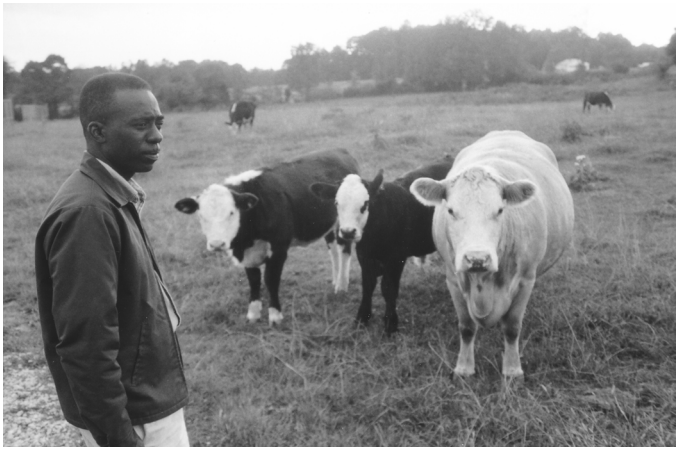


Figure 3.9. Robert Eades in the woods behind his house.

Figure 3.10. Jerry McCombs on his family's land.



To attend the different camp meetings, I needed different partners: someone with ties to that camp meeting had to be my host, so that I could be introduced to other attendees and gain their trust. Beatty himself was a member of Balls Creek camp meeting, and his tent was my home base there. At that meeting Beatty also introduced me to Robert Eades, who became another partner on the project (Figure 3.9). Like the

southern church generally, however, camp meeting is highly racially-segregated: Ball's Creek is historically white, while McKenzie's and Mott's are historically African-American. Beatty put me in touch with a fellow member of the Balls Creek Small Area Planning Committee, Jerry McCombs (Figure 3.10), to arrange a visit to McKenzie's. Though not a member of the camp meeting, McCombs knew people there and was glad to accompany me.

To visit Motts Grove, meanwhile, I renewed contact with an old acquaintance: Spencer Graham (Figure 1.1), whom I had met while working on the *Values and Land Use* project as an undergraduate. On a hot summer afternoon in 1998, I had stumbled upon Mott's Grove campground. At the time, I did not even know what I was looking at: I was unfamiliar with the area's camp meetings. Graham was there helping to repair one of the tents. An exceptionally friendly and open-minded individual, he invited me to sit on the back porch of his tent for a while and talk. When I got back in touch in 2002, he enthusiastically invited me to join him at camp meeting that August.

As I tried to suggest through the vignette in Section 1.1, attending camp meeting is an intense experience of place, faith, and community. The rhetorical skill of the preachers, particularly at the African-American camp meetings, is formidable, but nonetheless my strongest impressions of camp meeting are social. Camp meeting is an urban space in a rural setting: the close spacing of the tents puts participants in constant proximity to one another, fostering the kind of casual interaction that might take place on a city block (see Figure 3.11).[16] Community is presented here in microcosm, albeit atypically: the attendees live scattered far apart throughout the rest of the year.

[16] In the evenings, camp meeting attendees, particularly at Ball's Creek, stroll around the camp ground, chatting with each other and with those seated on the tent porches—an activity simply known as "walking

Figure 3.11. Camp meeting: urban social space in a rural setting. *Top and bottom right:* Ball's Creek Camp Meeting. *Bottom left:* McKenzie's Grove.

As a venue for making research contacts, camp meeting was ideal: not only was it an easy way to meet many people in one place, but the festival atmosphere put people in a contented, receptive mood. Since attendees are proud of this distinctive, local institution, they were generally unsurprised that an outsider like me would want to conduct a research project in the community.[17] Indeed, I had to contend with the problem

around" (CCHA 2004). I found this practice to resemble the Italian custom of *passegiata*, which literally means "promenade" but "specifically refers to the period of piazza strolling between 5:30 and 8 o'clock in the evening" (Del Negro and Berger 2001: 6). This kind of social activity requires urban density.

[17] This was particularly true at Balls Creek Camp Meeting, which has been extensively documented by local historians over the years. Motts and McKenzies have received much less attention, so attendees there were sometimes more suspicious of my intentions as a white outsider.

that many people assumed that the primary topic of my research was camp meeting itself; it was often hard to explain that I was approaching camp meeting as a window into the life of the area as a whole.

As community partners, Beatty, Eades, McCombs, and Graham were gatekeepers who provided access to different social networks. None of them, however, had the time or inclination to be directly involved in carrying out the interviewing itself. Instead, I broadened my pool of interviewers and interviewees through the middle school students in the *Knights, Camera, Action!* group (Box 2.1).

I also had to use a different entry point when seeking to include the voices of some more recent immigrants in the project. In general, most community members I have worked with have tended to conceive of the POL research as oriented toward documenting "heritage." Therefore, I have usually been referred to elders and members of long-standing local families as interviewee prospects. Reaching newer arrivals can prove much more challenging: even if partners are oriented toward recommending such individuals, they often simply do not know them. I was able to interview a Latino family through a Robert Eades contact, but I also knew that a large number of Hmong immigrants were moving into the area. Lacking any local connection, I relied upon an unrelated contact (someone I had met at a talk in Charlotte) to reach a couple of Hmong interviewees (Figure 3.12).

The Eastern Catawba Community Meeting (Figure 3.13) was held at Murray's Mill Historic Site on September 27, 2003, during the annual Murray's Mill Harvest Folk Festival. Beatty, who was one of the organizers of the event, arranged for us to use a historic structure on the site. This arrangement appeared ideal: a large number of local

people would be at the festival anyway, so it seemed as though it would be easy to attract participants. Also, the timing of the festival enabled me to visit the camp meetings in the preceding weeks, where I shared the project results and publicized the upcoming meeting. Anticipating high attendance, we scheduled three consecutive presentations on the 27th. As it turned out, however, the attendance was the lowest of any POL meeting, with just twenty community members participating. In retrospect, I think that holding the meeting during the Festival may have hurt attendance, instead of boosting it: many people were participating in conflicting festival activities, and others may have found accessing the meeting site via the festival to be too logistically daunting. The meeting was also hampered by the small venue: the seats had to be arranged in rows, rather than around tables, thus precluding the small group discussion process.

Figure 3.12. Xai Khue Khang and his daughter.

Figure 3.13. Eastern Catawba community meeting. Photo: Kyra Weinkle.

These shortcomings aside, the meeting itself was a success. The room was full for the second (main) presentation. Eades gave a welcome, while Beatty and McCombs provided commentary during the section breaks in the documentary. As in Stanley Creek, discussion following the presentation quickly turned to how the community could protect the values reflected in the documentary. This meeting also opened with a

Catawba Lands Conservancy presentation; nonetheless, talk of collective action did not center on the Conservancy, as it had in Stanley Creek. The Conservancy had very little name-recognition in eastern Catawba. The meeting discussion turned instead to a more familiar resource-management vehicle: the Small Area Planning process.

3.2.3. Western Rowan County

Figure 3.14. Robert Knox Farm, western Rowan County.

Figure 3.15. Adele Goodman at a family pig-pickin'.

The difference between western Rowan County and the other POL project sites quickly becomes evident if one drives along N.C. 150 between Mooresville and Salisbury: this is very much an active agricultural landscape (Figure 3.14). Western Rowan is still home to a substantial farming community, and in this community, conservation means farmland preservation. Everyone involved in the Western Rowan community project assumed that farmland preservation was the topic of conversation, and so it was, in the self-fulfilling manner of participatory research.

My community partner, Adele Goodman (Figure 3.15), is herself a dedicated farmland preservation advocate. Raised in a local farming family, she lived away from

the area for a number of years as an adult, but then returned. She works for a NASCAR racing team (stock-car racing is one of the fastest-growing industries in the Mooresville area). Dismissing the NASCAR culture of excess, however, she identifies her true passion as the protection of the rural landscape and community where she grew up. Prior to our collaboration, Goodman already had a documentary bent: she had conducted a series of written interviews with local farmers and compiled them into a booklet. POL simply provided her with new tools and a new forum. She pulled together an extensive list of prospective interviewees and conducted most of the interviews herself.

As in Eastern Catawba, the project area expanded over the course of the fieldwork (Figure 3.16). The LandTrust for Central North Carolina and I had envisioned working in an area roughly delineated by the small communities of Bear Poplar, Millbridge, and Mount Ulla. Goodman felt that all the farmers in the western part of the county shared a plight and a sense of identity, though; her list soon expanded to include contacts in locations outside our original project area, such as Woodleaf.

Goodman thoroughly publicized and planned the community meeting, which she treated as a movement-building opportunity: a chance to build solidarity among farmers and encourage them to advocate for their interests. The meeting was held on June 6, 2004, inside a big red barn that Patterson Farms uses as a sort of auditorium for visiting school groups (Figure 3.17). Thanks to Goodman, the meeting was by far the best-attended of the POL meetings, with seventy participants. In order to set a casual, social tone, Goodman provided a meal before the meeting, and people had a chance to mingle outside the barn. Goodman and LandTrust board president John Wear gave opening

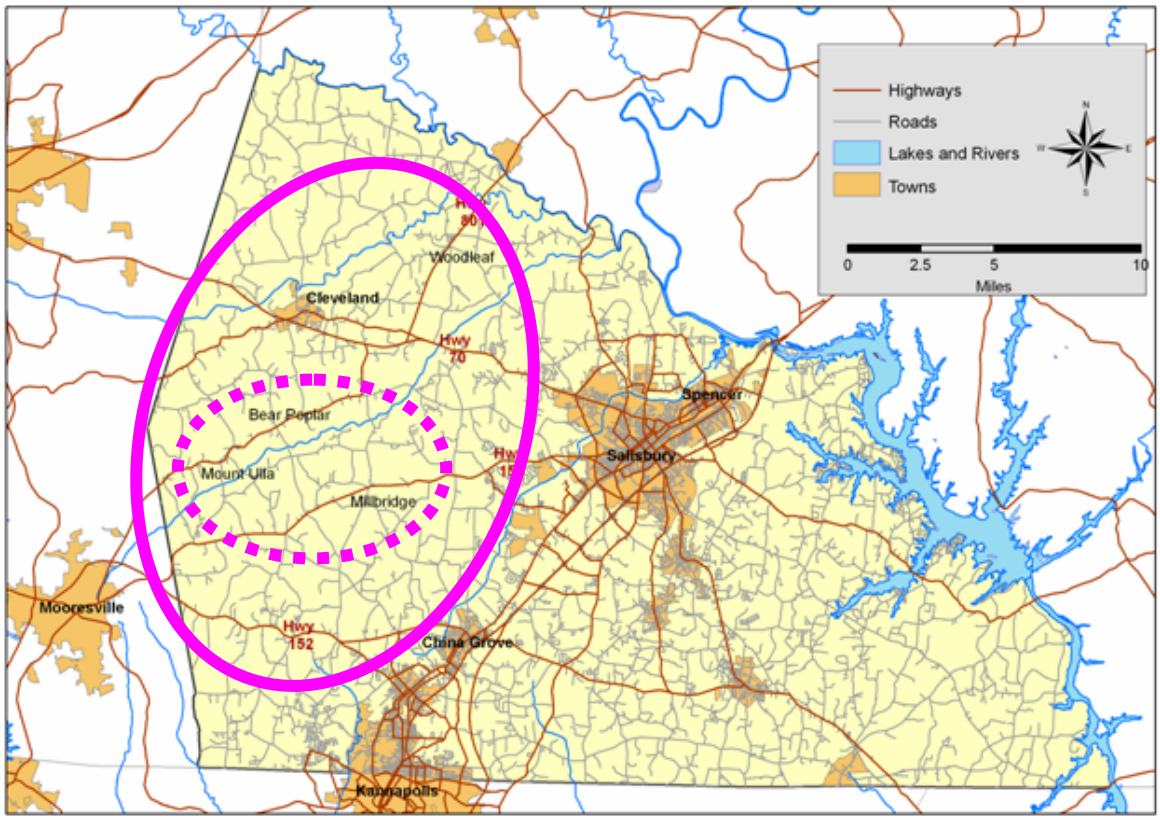


Figure 3.16. Rowan County. Dotted pink line delineates original project site. Solid line delineates expanded project site.

remarks, and Goodman provided framing commentary during the documentary presentation. As in eastern Catawba, the subsequent discussion took place in a full-group, rather than small-group, format. However, the discussion period on this occasion lasted considerably longer, so more people got involved.

Figure 3.17. Western Rowan community meeting.
Image captured from video footage by Philip Maier.

As expected, conversation centered on issues facing farmers and farmland. Goodman frequently called upon LandTrust Executive Director Jason Walser (Jeff Michael's successor) to provide information about land protection options and policy, but he only discussed tools and strategies that he deemed directly relevant to farmers. The attendees expressed particular interest in establishing some means of staying better informed about policy decisions that might affect them, so that they could voice their opinions to lawmakers. Goodman offered to establish an email list/phone tree so that the community could stay abreast of such developments.

3.2.4. The Uwharries

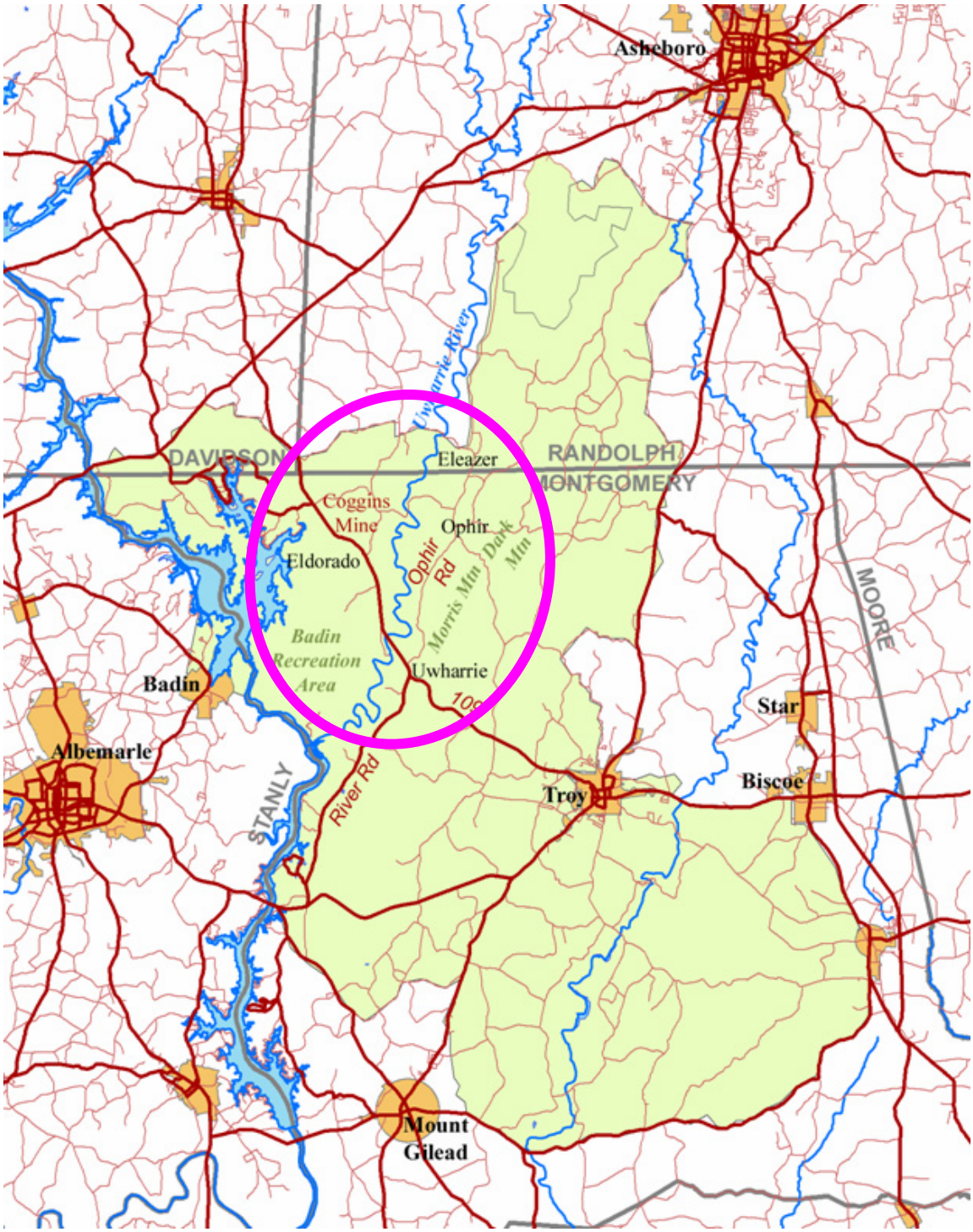


Figure 3.18. Uwharrie region. Pink line delineates project site.

The furthest project site from Charlotte (or any major urban area), the Uwharries is also distinctive in several other respects. The terrain is hillier than elsewhere in the Piedmont, broken up by a range of monadnocks[18] known as the Uwharrie "Mountains." This undulating landscape historically precluded farming on the scale that was practiced in the surrounding region, which contributed to a sense of economic and social marginalization among local residents. Forestry is the predominant land use in the area today, and significant tracts of public forestland comprise the Uwharrie National Forest.

The POL project focused on the quadrangle formed by four small settlements—Eldorado, Eleazer, Ophir, and Uwharrie—located in northwest Montgomery County and southwest Randolph County (Figure 3.18). This boundary delineation proved quite robust; residents of this area are separated from surrounding areas by ridges and National Forest holdings, and they tend to see themselves as distinct.

My initial community partner in the Uwharries was Ruth Ann Grissom (Figure 3.19), who grew up on her family's farm between Eleazer and Ophir. She left the area for college and lived as far away as New York City, but then moved back to Charlotte and started spending most

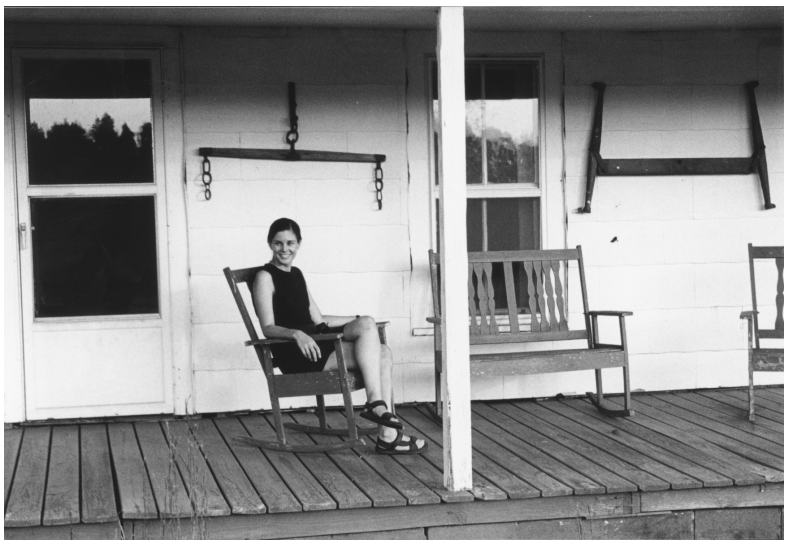


Figure 3.19. Ruth Ann Grissom on the front porch of her family's old house.

[18] The Piedmont plateau represents the eroded remains of an ancient mountain system. Areas of erosion-resistant rock remain in the form of hills known as *monadnocks.*

weekends at the homeplace. She and her sister Amy dedicated themselves to protecting the Uwharrie landscape.

Grissom took an active role in the fieldwork process, introducing me to prospective interviewees and accompanying me to do some of the interviews. She did not want to conduct interviews by herself, however. One interviewee, Bobby Hall (Figure 3.20), became another partner on the project, arranging a couple of additional interviews and accompanying me to complete them.

Figure 3.20. Betty Jane and Bobby Hall in front of their woodpile.

At times, Uwharrie fieldwork involved unconventional interviewing venues and strategies; interviewees and I often discussed the landscape in the course of directly negotiating that landscape. I sometimes made recordings in pick-up trucks bouncing along the back roads and dirt tracks of the area, while interviewees talked about the places we passed. A particularly memorable "roving interview" was conducted with 99-year-old Claude Morris in Bobby Hall's mini-van **(**Figure 3.21). As Hall drove around the hills, Morris spouted a continuous stream of stories and reminiscences about each location we encountered—unveiling a comprehensive "memoryscape" (Climo and Cattell 2002: 21) in which discourse and place were precisely aligned. This experience could scarcely be called an interview, since Morris's stream of consciousness overwhelmed any

conversational structure that I tried to impose. The result, however, was a fascinating and unique document. On another occasion, I interviewed outfitter Scott Morrow during a canoe trip down the Uwharrie River on a drizzly, cold February morning (Figure 3.22). The interview itself was conducted around a campfire beside the river, during our lunchtime break.

Figure 3.21. Claude Morris near the site where he grew up, which is now part of the Uwharrie National Forest.

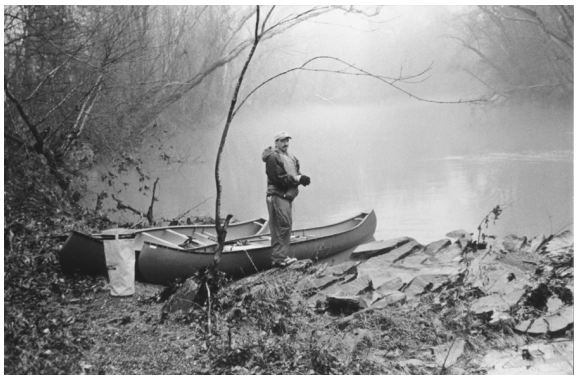


Figure 3.22. Scott Morrow by the Uwharrie River.

Figure 3.23. Uwharrie community meeting. *Left:* small group discussions. *Right:* full group discussion. Images captured from video footage by Andrew Herman.

The venue for the Uwharrie community meeting (Figure 3.23; see also Section 3.1) was arranged by Bobby Hall, who also provided a welcome. Again, the LandTrust gave an initial presentation, followed by the documentary screening. Since Grissom did not feel comfortable providing framing commentary, I did so. As recounted above, we

employed the same small-group discussion format as we had in Stanley Creek, and the results were again powerful. A few participants raised questions about the motives, scope, and funding of the project, but the overall tone was one of heartfelt solidarity among community members. Again, there seemed to be pent-up local demand for this kind of conversation. Indeed, there was so much interest in having an ongoing conversation that a one-year follow-up meeting was held in February 2005 (see Section 5.2.4).

That is one telling of the Perspectives on Land story—an admittedly partial one. The story does not end with the community meetings—community members, the sponsoring land trusts, and I have all continued to be involved in responding to the visions that were articulated through the project. Stories and people from the project communities were brought together through the exhibit at the Levine Museum of the New South (Box 2.2). In 2006, I met with my community partners to document their stories from the project and what happened after: those stories will be covered in Chapter Five. Next, I will discuss the insights into community ecological narratives afforded by the project.

3.3. Characterizing ecological narratives in community discourse

The Perspectives on Land community projects endeavored to co-create narratives that expressed connections between people and the environment—narratives that would be persuasive to the members of a particular community. As I have discussed previously, it would be misleading to presume that these narratives were "naturally occurring" in a community before the project started; rather, they are a product of the collaboration

between community members and an outside researcher (me), as well as the unique discursive spaces created through the project. This said, POL can begin to illuminate a community's discursive "repertoire" (see Section 2.1): what narrative elements do community members draw upon when considering their changing landscapes, and how do these elements vary within and across communities? I will explore those variations below.

3.3.1. Data set

To analyze ecological narratives from POL, I will draw upon the *public document* produced by each community project, which consists of the documentary itself plus recorded footage from the meetings. Each documentary represents an initial attempt to convey, through community members' language, salient themes that emerged over the course of fieldwork in a community. Participants' comments from the meeting represent a critique of and supplement to that initial attempt. Though we always invited critical response following the documentary presentations, direct critiques were rare; nonetheless, in the ensuing discussion, participants elaborated on themes that had seemed particularly important or interesting to them, thereby elaborating, inflecting, or contradicting the narratives presented in the documentary.

Cross-community comparisons are facilitated by the relatively uniform structure of the public document from each community. As described in Section 2.7, both the POL interviews and documentaries generally follow a consistent narrative progression: *orientation* (what community members value about their home landscape), *complication* (how that landscape is changing), *result* (present status as a consequence of those changes), and *coda* (visions for the future, based on the foregoing sequence of events).

Discourse across the four meetings was also largely functionally consistent, despite the differences among the events: in each case, most discussants were proceeding from the visions articulated in the documentary and beginning to talk practically about how they could be achieved.

Despite our attempts to integrate them, however, interviews and meetings remained distinct rhetorical contexts, and it is important to be mindful of those differences (see Section 2.10). Each venue tended to favor certain types of speech and certain types of speakers, so in moving from interviews to meeting we gained some interlocutors and lost others. We designed our meetings to be inclusive discursive spaces, but we could not include someone if they did not even feel comfortable coming to the meeting. In terms of analysis, I am also restricted to the speech that was captured by the meeting recordings. Since it was logistically impossible to discernibly record the multiple simultaneous conversations during the small-group discussion sessions, most of the usable footage comes from the full-group discussions, during which only a subset of participants spoke.

3.3.2. Voices in the documentaries and meetings: demographic comparison

Table 3.1 summarizes the aggregate demographic traits of the speakers in the documentaries and the meetings, respectively. Note that these figures are based on discourse segments, not on individuals: percent female, for example, reflects the proportion of discourse segments in the documentaries and meetings in which the speaker was female, not the proportion of interviewees or meeting attendees who were female. In other words, they are measures of representation in the recorded discourse, not representation in the participant population.

	Documentaries					Meetings				
	Stanley Creek	E. Catawba	W. Rowan	Uwharries	**Overall**	Stanley Creek	E. Catawba	W. Rowan	Uwharries	**Overall**
Age*										
Range (decade)	40-90	30-90	30-80	10-90	**10-90**	40-80	10-50	30-60	30-70	**10-80**
*Average***	61	50	47	59	**54**	59	38	37	50	**46**
Gender (%)										
Female	60	30.43	21.05	21.5	**33.25**	32.35	23.08	71.43	56.67	**45.88**
Male	42.5	71.74	78.95	78.49	**67.92**	82.35	76.92	46.43	53.33	**64.76**
Ethnicity (%)										
African American	5	23.91	0	0	**7.23**	0	38.46	0	0	**9.62**
Hmong	0	13.04	0	0	**3.26**	0	0	0	0	**0**
Latina/o	0	4.35	5.26	0	**5.67**	0	0	0	0	**0**
White	95	61.86	94.74	100	**87.9**	100	61.54	100	100	**90.39**
Local/outsider (%)***										
Local	70	82.6	80.7	93.55	**81.71**	61.76	92.31	77.77	53.33	**71.29**
Outsider	22.5	17.4	19.3	6.45	**16.41**	20.59	7.69	11.11	36.67	**19.02**

Table 3.1. Demographic traits of speakers in POL documentaries and meetings. Based on 236 coded discourse segments from documentaries and 111 from meetings. Data from all communities were weighted equally to calculate overall figures. Percentages may not sum to 100, because some discourse segments include overlapping speech from multiple individuals and certain demographic information is unknown for some speakers. * Age is estimated by decade, because exact ages are sometimes unknown, particularly among meeting speakers. ** Average age is based on decadal age estimates. *** Consistent with cultural conventions in rural North Carolina, "local" only refers to individuals who grew up in the community. Those who moved into a community do not count, even after many decades; neither do people from nearby communities outside the project area.

Based on this demographic data, some generalizations can be made about the speakers in the POL projects. To begin with, they were mostly locals. Though most residents of the project communities probably were born locally, the predominance of locals also reflects the scope of the POL projects, which were primarily focused on documenting the discourse of rural residents who were seeing their landscapes change,

and as such were biased toward local voices. It also reflects the tendency of community members to assume that the projects aimed to document "heritage," leading them to disproportionately recommend local interviewees.

The proportion of locals decreased somewhat in the meetings, in part because the meetings attracted participants from a larger geographic area than the documentaries. It is also probable that a significant proportion of the people who have moved into these rural communities 1) have moved from more urban areas where meetings on land use issues and the implementation of land use regulations are a more regular phenomenon, 2) were motivated to move into the community because of rural attributes that they would like to see protected, and 3) are more highly-educated than most locals. Outsiders who fit this description are, I would contend, more likely to attend a public meeting on land use issues than most locals (assuming they are notified about the meeting, that is). This local-outsider distinction became much more apparent during the Little Tennessee Perspectives project.

Speakers in POL were mostly white, which reflects the overall demographics of these rural communities but also the limits of the social networks within which the project team usually operated: as described earlier, reaching non-white interviewees typically required a deliberate modification of fieldwork strategy. These aggregate data also mask differences among the four community projects. Most of the minority voices are from eastern Catawba, which was indeed the most ethnically diverse project community; by contrast, participants in the Uwharrie project were all white, which is also a fair representation of that local population.

Meeting attendees were even less ethnically diverse than the interviewees. Despite specific attempts to encourage non-white community members to attend the meetings (invitation letters, face-to-face invitations, telephone calls), only one showed up: my community partner, Jerry McCombs. A number of factors probably contributed to this, including the language barrier (in the case of Latina/o interviewees) and cultural differences in communicative norms (when people told me that they would be there, I assumed they would be, but they apparently did not). Excuses aside, though, I think it is hard to avoid the unpleasant conclusion that discursive spaces in rural North Carolina are still largely—albeit tacitly and perhaps subconsciously—racially segregated. The POL meetings may have been perceived as "white" spaces by non-white community members.

The overrepresentation of men is another reflection of the peer referral process: middle-aged and older white men were consistently the most frequently recommended demographic in the communities where I worked. Again, more effort should be made to correct for this in the future. Gender ratios from the individual communities do not display any uniform pattern, however: in the Uwharries and Western Rowan, women were particularly scarce in the documentaries but spoke more than men in the meetings, while the reverse was true in Stanley Creek. A partial explanation for this is that the meeting data reflects the disproportionate influence of certain vocal individuals—including my community partners, who were largely female. The partners had only small roles in the discourse of the documentaries but were active participants in the meeting discussions.

I am not trying to blame my community partners for any lack of diversity in project discourse; if I saw a need to involve a subpopulation that lay outside their social

network, then it was my responsibility to insist on it. They were holding up their end of the partnership simply by allowing me access to the community as they knew it. To effectively foster the creation of more demographically diverse spaces, I now realize that I would have needed to place greater emphasis on such a goal when beginning work in each community.

My reluctance to assert the primacy of demographic diversity in POL/LTP reflected a conflict inherent to participatory research: the mandate to represent the diversity of a population can be at odds with the mandate to respect local conceptions of "community." Critics (Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Hayward, Simpson, and Wood 2004; Neumann 2005) are correct in pointing out that the rhetoric of "community" and "participation" can mask disproportionate representation of certain subpopulations and exclusion of others. This critique does not resolve the issue, however. Designing a project to reflect one local perspective on "community" is problematic, because it risks marginalizing other perspectives. Favoring an externally-imposed standard of diversity over local conceptions of community identity can be problematic too, however; privileging the researcher's value system over that of community members contradicts the premise of participatory research. I do not think that this problem has one right answer: in some cases it is appropriate for community partners' perspectives to shape the research design, and in other cases it is appropriate to challenge those perspectives. In my experience, participatory research requires continual negotiation of these competing imperatives.

3.3.3. Diversity in POL discourse

In order to elucidate the patterns and processes characterizing the discourse of the POL community projects, it is useful to identify the variety and relative frequency of distinct narratives through which community members expressed their relationships to place. This exercise is comparable to taking an inventory of the species that are found in a given habitat: instead of biodiversity, this is a measure of "narrative diversity." Using a grounded theory approach (Patton 2002), I have developed two narrative typologies based on patterns in the coded project data: one that differentiates narrative elements functionally and one that does so thematically. Used in tandem with each other, these typologies can be used to characterize narrative diversity. To improve the validity my classification schemes, I solicited feedback on them from my community partners during follow-up interviews conducted in 2006.

Below, I introduce the functional and thematic narrative typologies. Then I describe how they will be used to characterize the scaling of discursive variation.

3.3.4. A functional narrative typology

As already discussed, the general narrative arcs comprised by the public documents from the four POL communities are structurally similar; variations within and among the community projects lie in the *perspectives* legitimated by different speakers (Foucault 1977). The functional narrative typology that I have developed classifies discourse segments first according to the function they perform within the structure of a narrative, and then by the perspective conveyed through that function. This typology is summarized in Table 3.2.

Function	***Perspective***
Legitimation	1. evaluation 2. rationalization 3. mythopoesis
Orientation	H. heritage A. affinity
Complication	y. change n. continuity
Result	L. loss G. gain I. inevitability
Coda	#. collective *. individual

Table 3.2. Functional narrative typology. Used to classify discourse segments by functional category and perspective.

Most of the functional categories in this typology have already been introduced; they correspond to Labov's sequence of narrative structures (1972). I have added another functional designation: *legitimation*. This is not actually a narrative structure; rather, it refers to the ways in which interlocutors establish the credibility of their message. My legitimation types are derived from Fairclough (2003): *evaluation* refers to legitimation through appeal to shared values, *rationalization* is legitimation through appeal to logic or empirically-verifiable fact, and *mythopoesis* is legitimation through story.[19] This third category is of particular interest in the context of this study, given my focus on narrative.

Just because a discourse segment is part of a narrative, however, does not necessarily means that it relies upon mythopoesis for legitimation: many segments use evaluation or rationalization. The distinction between these latter two types is contextually variable: what one speaker considers a "value" may constitute a "fact" to another. I differentiate between the two based on my understanding of the speaker's

[19] Fairclough's typology also includes a fourth type of legitimation: *authorization*, meaning legitimation through appeal to a recognized, authoritative source. I have omitted this type because I did not find it to occur in the POL discourse data.

intention: does she believe that she is primarily appealing to a value or referencing a fact? Both can be distinguished from mythopoesis, though, because they appeal to an external value or knowledge system. Mythopoesis, by contrast, stakes legitimacy on the persuasiveness of the narrative itself: the speaker is to be believed because of the compelling manner in which he recounts experiences and events.

In this typology, *orientation* designates speech that locates the speaker in relationship to an environment/place, thereby explaining why she values that place. The two perspectives represent different ways of establishing that relationship: *heritage* bases the relationship on the duration of the speaker's personal or family experience in a place, while *affinity* bases the relationship on an attraction that the speaker feels toward some attribute of a place. This distinction is among the most crucial in understanding the discourse from POL and LTP, so I elaborate further on it in Section 3.3.3.

Complication, in the context of this research, refers to the way in which the speaker describes what is happening in her environment, i.e. whether they see *change* or *continuity*. Effectively, this is a question of whether or not the speaker thinks there is a complication at all; continuity signals the absence of complication. In practice, almost everyone in the project communities sees changes happening in their area—indeed, change would be hard to overlook in today's rural North Carolina landscape. Theoretically, however, a speaker could hold either perspective.

Result is closely linked to *complication*: if the area is changing, what effect is that change having? A negative view of change sees it resulting in the *loss* of the cherished values identified in the orientation; on the other hand, change could be described as bringing about desirable *gains*, increases in those values. Finally, change could be

portrayed as an *inevitability*, the results of which are neither bemoaned nor celebrated, but simply accepted.

The *coda* is the speaker's vision for the future: given the values he has articulated and the changes he has recounted, what course does he think the community should now chart? This narrative structure is the basis for beginning to identify discursive resources for collective action in a community. Accordingly, the critical perspectival distinction is between *collective* and *individual* visions: does the speaker argue that the community should work together toward a desired future, or that such a future is exclusively the purview of individuals acting alone?

POL and LTP differed in their approach to identifying resources for collective action. The identification process can be seen as comprising three questions: 1) Do community members favor collective action at all? 2) If they do favor collective action, what values would they like this action to protect? and 3) What form should the collective action take? The scope of inquiry for the POL interviews was focused on the second of these questions: in other words, we simply sought to document the values that were important to people, without directly ascertaining whether they thought collective action was valid or how it could be accomplished. By contrast, LTP raised all three questions. As a result, the POL documentaries are more "positive," focusing on the values that community members would like to see protected without fully exploring the policy choices that such protection could entail. Policy choices began to be addressed in more detail during the meetings. The *coda* is more fully-developed in the LTP documentary, in which the coverage of views on collective action is both more divisive and more representative.

3.3.5. Exploring differences in orientation: heritage *and* affinity

		Orientation	
		Heritage	*Affinity*
Legitimation	*Mythopoesis*	0.0704	-0.0212
	Evaluation	-0.0369	0.0245
	Rationalization	-0.0309	0.0024
Local/outsider status	*Local*	0.0417	-0.024
	Outsider	-0.0417	0.024

Table 3.3. Covariance of orientation type with legitimation type and local/outsider status. Shaded cells indicate positive associations.

As this covariance matrix indicates, the two orientation types have inverse profiles: *heritage* is positively associated with *mythopoesis* and local status, while *affinity* is positively associated with evaluation, rationalization (weakly), and outsider status. These differences point to important characteristics of each orientation type. *Heritage* relies primarily on *mythopoesis* for legitimation, because a speaker's heritage connection to place is established by telling a personal or family story of living in that place. Establishing an *affinity*-based connection to place, however, does not require a story (though stories can be used—note that the negative covariance between *affinity* and *mythopoesis* is not as strong as the positive covariance between *heritage* and *mythopoesis*). Rather, affinity is typically grounded in an evaluative or rational explanation of why the place has value to the speaker.

The other key characteristic of *heritage* is that it is almost exclusively employed by locals. *Affinity* is employed by outsiders and locals alike. What this means is that the set of speakers who invoke *heritage* is limited by genealogy, while the set of speakers who invoke *affinity* is readily and indefinitely expandable. Anyone who likes a place, even if they have just visited it once or seen pictures of it, can connect with that place

through affinity. To feel and credibly express a heritage connection, though, one has to have grown up in a place, been born there, or ideally be descended from a family that has lived there for generations.

The difference between *heritage* and *affinity* is illustrated by another comparison of Stanley Creek interviews that were conducted separately by Joyce Burt and myself. The first two substantive questions on the interview guide, which we were both using, are reprinted below:

> *Tell someone who's listening to this where we are. Can you describe this place a little bit as you know it? What are some of the interesting features of this land?*
>
> *Is this where you grew up? How did you end up here?*

As already discussed, the interviews were semi-structured, so the guide served more as a general outline than an exact script. Both Burt and I deviated from the printed text, as is evident in the following two excerpts. The first is taken from my interview with Barbara Rhyne (see Figure 3.25); the second is from Burt's interview with Alfred and Doris Rhyne (see Figure 3.24). In each excerpt, the interviewer is asking his/her first substantive question of the interview.

Excerpt 3.1

GC: Um::, and, can you, uh, just describe, for someone who's listening, uh, where we are, uh, what this place is, and yeah, just describe it a little bit.

BR: Uh, we are approximately two miles on the Stanley-Lucia Road, out from Stanley, uh, on the Rhyne Farm, that was established in about 17, uh, 42, I believe it was, somewhere in that er- era. The house was built in 1799, along the banks of Stanley Creek. For the- because- Uh, the site was chosen because of the red clay in this particular area, and the uh water that was close by that would be easy to make the handmade, hand-formed, sun-dried brick to make the house.

Excerpt 3.2

Time: 1:03

JB: OK, they give me a nice little list of questions here, and the first one is just to give me a idea of the history, you know how you got here, to this land, and , uh, you know, your age, just different things about yourself that you would like to tell.

AR: Well, my n- my age is 84 years old. I've lived in this area for those full 84 years…. ((AR continues))

Time: 2:19

AR: ((continues)) …and when Doris and I got married, we built this little house next door, and then we decided that we'd like to come down here on the Rhyne property. Now by the Rhyne property I mean, is this land was a part of the land grant from England by my forefathers, who came to this country as a young fellow, in uh Pennsylvania…. ((continues at length))

Burt and I launched our interviews in rather different ways. I, in accordance with the interview guide, begin by asking BR to describe the place where she lives. In reply, she starts describing the site in a manner which is informative but sounds like a tour guide's speech. Burt, on the other hand, while claiming to ask the "first" question, largely skips over it. The gist of that question is reflected only in her request to "give me a idea of the history," which is rolled into a paraphrase of question two: "how you got here, to this land." Finally, she asks about the interviewees' age, a demographic question that, according to the interview guide, should have been completed before beginning the substantive questions. The cumulative percolutionary effect of Burt's composite question is to ask the interviewees to tell the story of their connection to place. AR replies at great length, beginning with his own life. Then, without further prompting, his storyline flashes back to the mid-eighteenth century, and he proceeds to trace his family's connection to Stanley Creek from its colonial beginnings. The contrast between the two excerpts is all the more striking because both interviewees are actually talking about the same topic: the history of the Rhyne family.

BR's speech fits the profile of an *affinity* orientation: she is *describing* the place by enumerating some of the distinctive (i.e. appealing) features of the site. These are features whose value could be appreciated by anyone, whether or not they were from Stanley Creek. Indeed, BR treats these attributes as matters of general, rather than personal, interest. Her tone is detached and her voice passive; she does not use a first-person pronoun. Judging from this excerpt, her connection to place could best be described as that of an observer—though, in reality, she has lived in the house since she married into the Rhyne family decades ago. While her speech has narrative elements, the principal legitimation technique is *rationalization*—appeal to verifiable fact.

AR's speech fits the *heritage* profile: rather than describing place, he is *telling a story* about it. The story is highly personalized: he organizes the account around his own life and frequently uses first-person pronouns. Though he does reference verifiable information, AR's primary means of legitimation is *mythopoesis*: he is relying on a compelling narrative to explain his connection to place, which is rooted in genealogy.

It is noteworthy that BR and I are outsiders, while AR and Burt are locals. The two interviewees clearly made different assumptions about how to answer the interviewer's question, but those differing assumptions were anticipated by the phrasing of those questions themselves. Upon reviewing these transcripts, I have come to realize that the very wording and order of the questions in the interview guide favored an *affinity* perspective over a *heritage* perspective, because the interviewee is asked first to describe a place and only secondarily to recount the history of their connection to it. This sequence made sense to me as an outsider: I would first ask the interviewee to introduce the valuable attributes of the place, and then I would ask her about her life story. As a

community member, Burt had the rhetorical competence to realize that, when interviewing a local, the order should be inverted: she first asked the interviewee for his life story, knowing that, in the course of telling that story, he would convey why the place had value to him. From this example, it is possible to see that, from a *heritage* perspective, values characteristically emerge as a function of story; from an *affinity* perspective, the reverse is true.[20]

The difference between *heritage* and *affinity* has considerable implications for the strategies that conservation organizations use in working with communities, which will be elaborated in Chapter Five but are worth noting here. If the organizations in question operate at a regional scale or broader, their representatives will probably often find themselves working in communities where they are outsiders. Like me, these representatives will likely try to appeal to community members' values through the language of *affinity*, a *lingua franca* that is understood by all—locals, outsiders, conservation professionals, financial supporters, the media, and so on. In all likelihood, they will speak this language without even thinking about it—and in all likelihood, most community members will understand their messages. Locals as well as outsiders, after all, can employ the language of *affinity*.[21]

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[20] This example also demonstrates the bias that interviewer perspective brings to the research process. Taking an constructivist approach, I have explicitly acknowledged my own subjectivity in this research, rather than endeavoring to eliminate it (see Section 2.2). This approach, I believe, better prepares me to identify my own biases and correct for them as needed. IPRM incorporates multiple "checks" on researcher bias, the most fundamental of which is collaboration with community partners. As illustrated here, the perspective that a partner brings to a project can contrastively illuminate the researcher's perspective. Feedback and discussion in public meetings represent another important check.

[21] Indeed, locals may speak of place primarily in terms of *affinity* if they are seeking to frame the value of place in global terms. For example, Western Rowan farmers relied on *affinity* to describe the economic value of their land (see Section 3.4.3).

Just because locals can use this language, however, does not mean they do not know it for what it is: a tongue that transcends locality. By speaking in solely terms of *affinity*, the conservation representative is also unintentionally saying "I am an outsider." To locals, she sounds like all the other outsiders who are bringing change to the community: retirees, commuters, and yes, developers. Her appeals, then, may be alienating the population that, in rural North Carolina, still owns most of the land that conservation organizations want to protect. This does not mean that she should try to adopt a *heritage* voice herself, because that would not be credible and could seem like mockery. She should, however, demonstrate awareness that locals have another way of talking about place, and she should be attentive to that voice. In my experience, involving a community member in talking to fellow locals about the conservation initiative is the best way to do this; listening to locals' stories through conversations and interviews can also prove helpful.

3.3.6. Applying the functional narrative typology

Different community narratives may contain any combination of the functional categories and types introduced in the foregoing typology (REF). A particular narrative can be identified by a string that reflects its composition. For example, the narrative *1AyL** is one that, through appeal to shared values, identifies attractive attributes of the local environment, describes the changes that are occurring to that environment and the consequent loss of the aforementioned attributes, and argues that it is up to individuals to address this problem. Theoretically, the complete set of possible narratives includes every combination of the functional elements—though, in fact, some combinations did not occur.

Some narratives may not contain all of the functional elements that I have introduced. Some lack a coda, leaving the listener to draw his own conclusions. Others do not have an orientation of the kind that I described here; rather, they seek legitimation through direct appeal to a "self-evident" value or principle. In POL/LTP, the principles most frequently invoked derived from religious doctrine, market economics, or constructions of the individual's role in society. Such narratives can be literally "disorienting" to the listener, because she is not told why the speaker feels the way he does: he espouses a value in the abstract, without grounding it in his own experience. By omitting an orientation, the speaker has not located himself in relation to the landscape—a rhetorical move that can be used to downplay the significance of place and advance a "universal" argument.

In any case, the community project data contains few intact narratives. As already discussed, my unit of analysis has been the *discourse segment*, an isolable speech act (see Section 2.6). These are the building blocks from which I analytically construct narratives. Discourse segments can themselves contain multiple functional elements—indeed, some are entire, self-contained stories. Recall that individuals' stories contribute to, but are not synonymous with, community narratives. These stories may follow their own progressions from orientation to coda, and these elements may not correspond to categories in the typology that I have introduced. My functional typology pertains only to the overall narrative arc of the community projects.

3.3.7. A thematic narrative typology

Even if two narratives include an identical sequence of functional elements, they are not necessarily the same. There are an unlimited number of potential narrative

approaches to place, each of which reference particular values and construct the environment in a particular way. I describe these distinct narrative constructions of place as *thematic narrative types*.

Through open coding, I have attempted to catalog the thematic narrative types that are represented in the project data from POL and LTP. Consistent with a *grounded theory* approach, I allowed these analytic categories to emerge from the data, rather than imposing a pre-existing typology (Patton 2002). That said, my approach to identifying narrative types was conservative: I only identified new types when the rhetorical properties of a discourse segment could not be fully explained by previously identified types.

Through this analysis, I have come up with 50 narrative types, each of which is unique from the others in some way. These types are listed Table 3.4 below. Despite their irreducibility, the types can be grouped into broader categories for analytical purposes. Another researcher would doubtless organize the same data according to a different classification scheme; nonetheless, I believe that this typology, which incorporates input from my community partners, offers a fair representation of the variety of ways in which POL/LTP participants constructed their worlds.

Table 3.4. Thematic narrative typology, based on POL and LTP data.

Classification		*Type*	*Description*
Moral *Ascribes absolute value to place based on principle.*	**Intrinsic** *Attributes value to inherent traits of place.*	**Unique**	*Asserts that one's home place/community is unique in the world and preferable to all others.*
		Naturalist	*Attributes inherent interest to unusual organisms and natural phenomena without considering how they fit into a broader ecological context.*
		Biodiversity	*Ascribes inherent virtue to biotic diversity. Considers only taxonomy, not function.*
		Ecological	*Reflects an appreciation of the ecological interactions among organisms and the biophysical environment. Values particular organisms or phenomena because of their contribution to the ecosystem as a whole.*
	Creedal *Bases value in doctrine.*	**Religious**	*Derives appreciation for place from religious doctrine (e.g. Christian stewardship of God's creation).*
		Ethical	*Accords value based on an ethical standard (e.g. every living thing's inherent right to exist).*
		Property	*Values place as property. In the Lockean tradition, regards private property as a "natural" phenomenon, with inherent rights appertaining thereto, as ensured by the U.S. Constitution. Denies or doubts the validity of restrictions on property rights (Freyfogle 2003).*
		Laissez-faire	*Expresses confidence that place will be assigned appropriate value by unrestricted markets. Opposes interference in the operation of these markets.*

Continued on next page.

Table 3.4, continued:

Classification		*Type*	*Description*
Instrumental *Values place because of what it has to offer.*	**Consumptive** *Extracts valuable goods from place.*	**Economic**	*Values place because it provides income, sustains livelihood.*
		Natural resource	*Views place in terms of the useful resources that can be obtained from it.*
		Agriculture practice	*Describes how crops are grown matter-of-factly, without embellishment.*
		Agriculture proficiency	*Prizes competence in agricultural practice, and attests to competence of certain individuals or groups.*
		Self-sufficiency	*Recalls a time when a family could sustain itself almost entirely from its own land. Treats this self-sufficiency as a source of pride.*
	Non-consumptive *Gains value from place without trying to extract resources.*	**Environmental**	*Values the environment for the indirect benefits ("ecosystem services") it provides humans, e.g. clean air/water, quality of life.*
		Emotive	*Expresses an unanalyzed emotional valuation of place, e.g. "I just really love this place."*
		Aesthetic	*Appreciates the beauty of a place.*
		Amenity	*Cites environmental/aesthetic qualities of a place as factors in why it is attractive to oneself or others. Associated with the concept of "amenity migration," in which people move to a place because of its natural assets (McGranahan 1999).*
		Knowledge	*Bases an appreciation of place on specific, traditional knowledge of that place (e.g. proficiency in the identification and use of local medicinal herbs).*
		Recreational	*Values the recreational opportunities available in a place.*
		Tourism	*Considers place as the subject of marketing and tourist development efforts.*

Continued on next page.

Table 3.4, continued:

Classification	*Type*	*Description*
Experiential *Values place because of direct, personal experiences there.*	**Outdoor experience**	*Derives value from direct, outdoor experience of place.*
	Farming lifestyle	*Idealizes farming as a lifestyle choice, characterized by self-reliance and connection to nature.*
	Cultivation	*Attests to the satistfaction of creating new life from the soil. Associated with farming lifestyle, but emphasizes the sensory experience of farming, rather than the identity of the farmer himself.*
	Sensory	*Encounters place through non-visual sensory experiences, which are often associated with specific memories and locations.*
	Spiritual	*Avows a sense of spiritual connection to place.*
	Fear	*Identifies threatening phenomena or spaces in the environment. Expresses aversion to certain experiences of place.*
	Life course	*Associates places with particular periods or moments in the speaker's life, such as early childhood or marriage.*
	Memory	*Descriptively recreates a specific past experience of place.*

Continued on next page.

Table 3.4, continued:

Classification		*Type*	*Description*
Socio-cultural *Considers place in terms of human social dynamics.*	**Interactional** *Focuses on the interactions among people.*	**Social**	*Describes place through the lives and social interaction of community members.*
	Identity *Focuses on the traits that differentiate groups of people.*	**Cultural**	*Characterizes a community culturally.*
		Historical	*Recounts notable historical events or forces that shaped a community.*
		Genealogical	*Reflects an inherited sense of connection to place, in which value is handed down from one's forebears and passed along to one's descendents. May parallel historical narrative, but more personal: pertains to a family, not a whole community.*
		Outsider	*Opposite of genealogical narrative. Affirms speaker's outsider status and lack of genealogical connection to place, thereby acknowledging the social significance of that connection.*
		Independence	*Attaches particular importance to independence as a defining cultural trait.*
	Control *Addresses differences in social groups' control over places.*	**Access**	*Views the landscape in terms of who has access to which resources. Differentiates among resource management regimes: private, communal, public. Also differentiates between ownership and access. Often laments enclosure of unofficial commons.*
		Peace & quiet	*Opposite of access narrative: ascribes value to lack of access. "Peace and quiet" can be code for respecting property boundaries and keeping "undesirable" social elements out of a community.*
		Justice	*Views landscape in terms of power inequities within the local population. Values sites that are controlled by disadvantaged populations, because they counter those inequities.*
		Class	*Opposite of justice narrative: values places that exclude lower-status populations (e.g. by banning trailer parks).*
		Movement	*Seeks to involve community members in taking greater control over their future.*
	Management *Approaches place as a problem to be addressed through resource management.*	**Policy**	*Frames place as a subject for policy debates. Argues for or against various policy solutions.*
		Conservation	*Espouses land conservation as an end in itself. Typically reflects support of non-governmental conservation strategies and land trusts.*
		Risk	*Views place in terms of how it is threatened, and how to avert those threats.*
		Hazard	*Identifies elements of the landscape and development pattern that pose threats to human health and safety. Frames the need for management in these terms.*

Continued on next page.

Table 3.4, continued:

Classification	*Type*	*Description*
Geographical *Approaches place analytically as a geographic area.*	**Spatial**	*Views the landscape in a spatially-explicit manner, encompassing both its geophysical attributes (e.g. topography) and the pattern of human settlement upon it.*
	Land use	*Describes landscape in terms of how different parts of it are used.*
	Demographic	*Focuses on the distributions and movements of populations, particularly in the context of in-migration. Typically divides the population into locals and outsiders.*
	Development	*Frames land "development" (typically suburban residential and commercial development) as a force of landscape change and an aggregate phenomenon with its own emergent properties (i.e. not the same as many individuals building houses). Typically presents development as a powerful, destructive force.*
	Infrastructure	*Focuses on changes in infrastructure (roads, water/sewer lines, electricity, etc.) as a critical driver of landscape and community change.*
	Rural	*Appreciates the "rural" attributes of a landscape, meaning not only low population density but a more ineffable sense of rural "character." Laments threats to this character.*
Negative		*Expresses values in terms of their decline and loss. Can be used generically to lament change as such or coupled with other narratives to decry the diminishment of particular, valued attributes of place.*

Bear in mind, once again, that in the community project data it is discourse segments, not entire narratives, that are classified using this typology. Community members' speech does not necessarily reflect just one of these types; rather, it may draw upon several of them at a time. By the same token, particular thematic narrative types are not exclusively associated with particular narrative structures from the foregoing functional typology—that is why I have kept the two classification systems separate.

3.3.8. Characterizing discursive scaling using narrative typologies

The multi-sited design of the POL project enables an examination of discursive scaling through multiscale analysis. The first guiding hypothesis for my research, as advanced in Section 1.1, is that *local discourses are ecologically interrelated with other elements of local ecosystems and therefore differ among communities and regions*. To test this hypothesis, I have used the functional and thematic narrative typologies introduced above to characterize narrative diversity at multiple scales. This analysis enables inferences about the *scale dependence* of discourse: ways in which patterns of discursive variation differ across scales (Turner, Gardner, and O'Neill 2001).

To study the ecological scaling of a phenomenon, the *grain* and *extent* of analysis must be identified. Grain represents the resolution of a given analysis; grain size, therefore, reflects the unit of analysis. Extent refers to the overall study area/landscape in which observation sites (grains) are located (Nekola and White 1999). As a null hypothesis, we might assume that discourse is *self-similar*, meaning that patterns of discursive variation are similar at all scales. If this were true, then we would expect to be able to predict variation at any grain size by measuring it at one grain size (Turner, Gardner, and O'Neill 2001). The grain size of an analysis would then be unimportant. Based on my fieldwork, however, I would not expect to find discursive self-similarity at the finest resolutions (i.e. discourse manifest through the communicative acts of individuals or small groups). Instead, I contend that *community* (as defined in Section 1.4.3) represents a particularly appropriate analytical grain for the study of discursive scaling.

As recounted in Section 3.2, the boundaries of the four POL *communities* were determined through a peer-referral (snowball sampling) process. As such, they approximated the population of individuals that were mutually recognized as interlocutors in a shared *community ecological discourse*. Ecological discourse could not be accurately assessed at a scale smaller than this, because it is a collective phenomenon: interviewing any one member or this community would not capture the full discursive variation represented by the self-defined whole. A larger grain size would capture portions of multiple community discourses with unknown degrees of commonality. *Community* is a grain size that can be justified on behavioral grounds, recalling the concept of *ecological neighborhood* (Addicott et al. 1987): in this case, the organisms of interest are humans and the behavior of interest is discourse.

A community, then, constitutes the grain of my POL discourse analysis, while the total project area represents the extent. On this basis, I examine narrative diversity at three scales in the POL data: 1) *alpha diversity* (α), the diversity of narratives within each community project; 2) *beta diversity* (β), the variation in narrative composition among community projects; and 3) *gamma diversity* (γ), the narrative diversity found in the POL project as a whole (Whittaker 1960). Measuring gamma diversity simply means enlarging the grain size to encompass the entire project region. Unlike *community*, this *region* does not have predefined rhetorical characteristics that recommend it as an analytic scale; it simply represents an aggregation of community project data.[22] Beta

[22] This does not mean that the discourse of the POL project region would not be expected to have distinct characteristics that differentiated it from other regions—it simply means that I did not define the region's boundaries on discursive grounds. There are, however, biophysical and demographic reasons to expect that the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina would exhibit its own emergent discursive properties. The distinguishing discursive characteristics of regions will become more apparent when POL discourse data are compared to data from another region (the Mountains) in Chapter Four.

diversity, however, is qualitatively different: it reflects the compositional changes that take place as one travels across the extent of the project area, moving from grain to grain (Nekola and White 1999). This multiscale analytic approach can be used to test the null hypothesis of self-similarity above the community scale by ascertaining whether the narrative diversity of the community project discourses can be used to accurately anticipate the diversity of POL discourse as a whole.

Narrative diversity, like biodiversity, can be understood as including two component measures: *richness* and *evenness/abundance* (Hurlbert 1971). The former is a tally of the narrative types present; the latter reflects the distribution of frequencies among these narrative types. In the following sections, I characterize the alpha, beta, and gamma diversity of POL discourse through measures of narrative richness and abundance.

3.4. Alpha diversity in POL discourse: narrative distributions in each community

Below, I have characterized the alpha narrative diversity of each POL community project in terms of the number of narrative types present and their respective abundances.

3.4.1. Stanley Creek

Table 3.5, below, summarizes the distribution of functional narrative types in discourse from the Stanley Creek project. More of the discourse is devoted to orientation (60.52%) than any other functional narrative category, suggesting that narratives in this project were primarily devoted to articulating sense of place, rather than addressing changes or proposing solutions. As expected, though, solution-oriented speech (codas)

became more prevalent in the meeting, while speech devoted to orientation decreased. *Evaluation* and *mythopoesis* were equally common legitimation strategies in the documentary, but, interestingly, the meeting increased the prevalence of *mythopoesis*: meeting participants frequently drew upon stories to make their points.

Function	***Perspective***	***Documentary (%)***	***Meeting (%)***	***Overall (%)***
Legitimation	1. evaluation	40	27.78	34.21
	2. rationalization	30	11.11	21.05
	3. mythopoesis	40	52.78	46.05
Orientation	H. heritage	47.5	30.56	39.47
	A. affinity	25	16.67	21.05
Complication	y. change	15	19.44	17.11
	n. continuity	0	0	0
Result	L. loss	5	16.67	10.53
	G. gain	0	2.78	1.32
	I. inevitability	5	0	2.63
Coda	#. collective	12.5	36.11	23.69
	*. individual	5	8.33	3.95

Table 3.5. Representation of functional narrative types in discourse data from the Stanley Creek community project. Figures indicate the percentage of discourse segments that feature a given functional element. Overall percentages are derived from the combined documentary and meeting data.

Table 3.6. lists the thematic narratives that occur in the project discourse from Stanley Creek. The percentages from the documentary and the overall project data reinforce the primacy of *genealogical* narrative in this community. The prevalence of the other highly-ranked narratives changes when the data from the meeting are incorporated, however. In the documentary, two narrative types—*genealogical* and *religious*—collectively occur in 35% of discourse segments. The next four narrative types—*aesthetic*, *cultural*, *natural resource* and *negative*—are each employed 12.5% of the time. All told, these six narrative types characterize 85% of the documentary. In the overall project data, however, just three narratives encompass a majority of the discourse: *genealogical*, *negative* (which rises in rank from third to second), and *conservation*

(which rises from fifth to third). This consolidation reflects the number of meeting participants who lamented changes that were taking place in their community and the broad appeal of land conservation as a partial antidote to those changes. While non-profit conservation was popular with the Stanley Creek group, *policy* was not an important topic. It was not mentioned at all in the documentary and rarely cited in the meeting.

Documentary			*Meeting*			*Overall*		
Rank	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***
1.	Genealogical	20	1.	Genealogical	27.78	1.	Genealogical	23.68
2.	Religious	15	2.	Negative	22.22	2.	Negative	17.11
3.	Aesthetic	12.5	3.	Conservation	19.44	3.	Conservation	13.16
3.	Cultural	12.5	4.	Ecological	13.89	4.	Nat. resource	10.53
3.	Nat. resource	12.5	4.	Property	13.89	4.	Social	10.53
3.	Negative	12.5	5.	Environmental	11.11	4.	Property	10.53
4.	Social	10	5.	Social	11.11	5.	Aesthetic	7.9
4.	Outdoor exp.	10	6.	Economic	8.33	5.	Religious	7.9
5.	Conservation	7.5	6.	Nat. resource	8.33	6.	Cultural	6.58
5.	Cultivation	7.5	7.	Historical	5.56	6.	Ecological	6.58
5.	Development	7.5	7.	Memory	5.56	6.	Economic	6.58
5.	Emotive	7.5	7.	Movement	5.56	6.	Environmental	6.58
5.	Land use	7.5	7.	Naturalist	5.56	7.	Development	5.26
5.	Property	7.5	7.	Peace	5.56	7.	Historical	5.26
5.	Spatial	7.5	8.	Aesthetic	2.78	7.	Memory	5.26
6.	Biodiversity	5	8.	Amenity	2.78	7.	Peace & quiet	5.26
6.	Economic	5	8.	Demographic	2.78	7.	Land use	5.26
6.	Farm. practice	5	8.	Development	2.78	7.	Outdoor exp.	5.26
6.	Historical	5	8.	Land use	2.78	7.	Spatial	5.26
6.	Knowledge	5	8.	Moral	2.78	7.	Cultivation	3.95
6.	Life course	5	8.	Outsider	2.78	7.	Emotive	3.95
6.	Memory	5	8.	Policy	2.78	7.	Naturalist	3.95
6.	Peace & quiet	5	8.	Spatial	2.78	8.	Biodiversity	2.63
7.	Amenity	2.5				8.	Amenity	2.63
7.	Demographic	2.5				8.	Demographic	2.63
7.	Environmental	2.5				8.	Farm. practice	2.63
7.	Farm. lifestyle	2.5				8.	Knowledge	2.63
7.	Fear	2.5				8.	Life course	2.63
7.	Laissez-faire	2.5				8.	Movement	2.63
7.	Naturalist	2.5				8.	Outsider	2.63
7.	Outsider	2.5				9.	Policy	1.32
7.	Recreational	2.5				9.	Farm. lifestyle	1.32
7.	Self-sufficien.	2.5				9.	Fear	1.32
7.	Sensory	2.5				9.	Laissez-faire	1.32
7.	Spiritual	2.5				9.	Moral	1.32
						9.	Recreational	1.32
						9.	Self-sufficien.	1.32
						9.	Sensory	1.32
						9.	Spiritual	1.32

Table 3.6. Ranking of thematic narrative types found in Stanley Creek discourse data. Thirty-five narratives types occurred in the documentary, 23 in the meeting, and 39 in the project overall. Themes are ranked according to the percentage of discourse segments in which they occur. Overall percentages are derived from combined documentary and meeting data.

Based on the distribution of thematic and functional narrative types in the project discourse, we can get an idea of what a "prototypical" Stanley Creek narrative might

sound like—a story that captures prevalent perspectives of project participants particularly well. The composition of such a narrative would be *3HyL#/genealogical*: a story that uses *mythopoesis* and a *heritage* orientation to express a genealogical connection to place, then describes changes that are threatening this sense of place and advocates collective action to protect it.

Alfred Rhyne's (Figure 3.24) personal history, parts of which were included in Excerpt 3.2, is a good example of how such a narrative might start. He references what Allen has called a "genealogical landscape," in which "sense of place is inseparable from a sense of the network of relations, past and present…" (1990: 161; as discussed in Section 1.5.3). The "Rhyne property" he identifies is not a modern-day parcel; instead, the term refers to all of the land originally granted to the first Rhyne settler in the 1700s (Figure 3.25). Such a site is what Allen refers to as a "homeplace"—a location that is seen as representing the history of a family (156). Alfred Rhyne's reading of the landscape effortlessly compresses three centuries, thereby imbuing places with a depth of meaning that would completely elude an outside observer. Perhaps Richard Rankin best summarizes this genealogical sense of place when describing how he feels about his family's land: "I have an immediate connection with the natural world out here, concentrated or focused in the knowledge that it's been in my family an awful long time."

Figure 3.24. Doris and Alfred Rhyne. Photo by Joyce Burt.

Figure 3.25. Richard and Barbara Rhyne in front of their home, the ancestral Rhyne homeplace. Their present-day farm was originally part of the much larger Rhyne land grant. The brickwork on the wall reads "TR 1799," referring to the original owner (Thomas Rhyne) and the year in which the house was completed.

Figure 3.26. Peggy Teague.

The prototypical Stanley Creek narrative is most fully realized in the words of Peggy Teague (Figure 3.26), some of which are included in Excerpt 2.1. In Table 3.6 below, I construct a narrative out of several passages from her interview that were included in the documentary.

Passage	*Type*
Well [my two grandchildren] over here already know how to pick up rocks out of the garden, what the garden is, how you work in the garden, and things like that. I mean, this one is a little too young yet, but by next spring he'll be ready to learn how to do things out in the garden. Now they, if they live with the land, they'll stay on it…. It depends upon how, how well they are connected with it. You can't predict how each generation is going to connect to the land…. You can only hope. *(passage previously excerpted in Section 2.5.1)*	3, H, Genealogical, *Life course*
A lot of the occupants [of Stanley Creek] now are immigrants. They've come in, they've come in from the city, they've come in from up North, where they never had that contact…. They didn't grow up knowing that you could walk out in the tomato patch out there, pick a tomato off the vine. Walk up to the horse trough, wash it off—and I say that and people go "Eww, horse trough!"—wash it off in the horse trough. And then go in the barn where you had a, kept salt to put in animal feed, dip it in the salt and sit there and eat it. I mean, they don't realize that you could go pick persimmons in the fall after the frost, and you could go find the muscadine vines and the blackberry vines and the plum trees and wild strawberries. They don't realize it's here. You just have to go look for it.	3, H, y, L, *1, 2, Cultural, Demographic, Knowledge, Negative*
I'm one who wants to see much of this kept as a natural area. There's going to be some developments—you're not going to stop development. We can only limit the amount of development by having large conservancy areas.	y, #, *1, 2, I, Development*

Table 3.7. Passages from Peggy Teague interview, organized into a narrative structure. Each excerpt is coded as to which narrative types it represents. The types of interest are listed first, followed by other types in italics.

When organized as a narrative, these passages include all the elements of the string *3HyL#/genealogical*. A number of other narrative types are also represented, illustrating the multivalence of this discourse.

Since the three passages were not consecutive in the original interview, the transitions between them are not smooth; nonetheless, they form a recognizable narrative progression. Teague introduces her genealogical connection to the land through

mythopoesis, telling about her grandchildren's interest in the garden. This use of genealogical narrative is atypical because it focuses on the speaker's descendents, rather than ancestors; Alfred Rhyne's story is more representative in this respect. Nonetheless, the same value of land as an inheritence is reflected by both speakers.

In the second passage, Teague sets up the narrative's complication by drawing a contrast between her own perspective on the landscape and that of outsiders ("immigrants"). This particularly complex passage is also an interesting example of *negative* narrative: the speaker expresses her own experiences and values in negative terms by explaining how they are not shared by the people who are moving into the area. In this way, she is able to address a problem while simultaneously elaborating on her own connection to place. She relates her experiences through *mythopoesis*, but also bolsters her credibility through reference to verifiable facts (*rationalization*) and assumptions about the shared values of different subpopulations (*evaluation*).

Having conveyed the loss of intimate ecological knowledge that would result if outsiders took over the whole Stanley Creek landscape, Teague ends by offering a solution: establishing "large conservancy areas." While placing conservation restrictions on one's own property may be an individual decision, Teague's vision points to the need for a collective effort. Teague herself has done her part to realize this vision by putting a conservation easement on her property. At the same time, her conclusion also reflects a belief in the *inevitability* of change: "you're not going to stop development."

3.4.2. Eastern Catawba

As in Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba project participants oriented themselves through heritage more often than through affinity, and they tended to favor collective

action (see Table 3.8). However, evaluation was the preferred legitimation technique, followed by mythopoesis and rationalization. Complication and result also figured more prominently in the narratives. A possible reason for this is that land use change is a more salient issue in Eastern Catawba, a sizeable rural area on the frontiers of suburban sprawl, than it is in Stanley Creek, where greater change has already happened and the landscape has achieved a steadier state. The only notable difference between the documentary and overall narratives was an increase in coda, again reflecting the more action-oriented conversation that took place at the meeting.

Function	***Perspective***	***Documentary (%)***	***Meeting (%)***	***Overall (%)***
Legitimation	1. evaluation	51.72	53.85	51.72
	2. rationalization	40	7.69	32.76
	3. mythopoesis	40	30.77	37.93
Orientation	H. heritage	40	46.15	41.38
	A. affinity	28.89	0	22.41
Complication	y. change	35.56	7.69	29.31
	n. continuity	0	0	0
Result	L. loss	24.44	7.69	20.69
	G. gain	4.44	0	3.45
	I. inevitability	0	0	0
Coda	#. collective	11.11	61.54	22.41
	*. individual	0	0	0

Table 3.8. Representation of functional narrative types in discourse data from the Eastern Catawba community project. Figures indicate the percentage of discourse segments that feature a given functional element. Overall percentages are derived from the combined documentary and meeting data.

Seven thematic narrative types recur in 86 percent of the discourse from the Eastern Catawba project: *social*, *natural resource*, *economic*, *demographic*, *justice*, *religious*, and *spatial* (see Table 3.9). Project participants spoke of place foremost as a site of *social* interaction. A prototypical Eastern Catawba narrative would exhibit the structure *1HyL#/social*.

Documentary			*Meeting*			*Overall*		
Rank	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***
1.	Social	20.00	1.	Historical	23.08	1.	Social	18.97
2.	Nat. resource	17.78	1.	Policy	23.08	2.	Nat. resource	13.79
3.	Economic	15.56	2.	Negative	15.38	3.	Economic	12.07
4.	Spatial	13.33	2.	Social	15.38	4.	Demographic	10.35
5.	Justice	11.11	3.	Amenity	7.69	4.	Justice	10.35
5.	Religious	11.11	3.	Conservation	7.69	4.	Religious	10.35
5.	Demographic	11.11	3.	Demographic	7.69	4.	Spatial	10.35
6.	Genealogical	8.89	3.	Justice	7.69	5.	Historical	8.62
7.	Aesthetic	6.67	3.	Life course	7.69	6.	Genealogical	6.90
7.	Environmental	6.67	3.	Movement	7.69	6.	Life course	6.90
7.	Life course	6.67	3.	Property	7.69	6.	Negative	6.90
8.	Amenity	4.44	3.	Recreational	7.69	7.	Aesthetic	5.17
8.	Cultural	4.44	3.	Religious	7.69	7.	Amenity	5.17
8.	Emotive	4.44	3.	Sensory	7.69	7.	Environmental	5.17
8.	Historical	4.44				7.	Policy	5.17
8.	Property	4.44				7.	Property	5.17
8.	Recreational	4.44				7.	Recreational	5.17
8.	Development	4.44				8.	Cultural	3.45
8.	Farm. practice	4.44				9.	Development	3.45
8.	Negative	4.44				9.	Emotive	3.45
8.	Unique	4.44				9.	Farm. practice	3.45
9.	Biodiversity	2.22				9.	Unique	3.45
9.	Land use	2.22				10.	Biodiversity	1.72
9.	Memory	2.22				10.	Conservation	1.72
9.	Rural	2.22				10.	Land use	1.72
						10.	Memory	1.72
						10.	Movement	1.72
						10.	Rural	1.72
						10.	Sensory	1.72

Table 3.9. Ranking of thematic narrative types found in Eastern Catawba discourse data. Twenty-five narratives types occurred in the documentary, 14 in the meeting, and 29 in the project overall. Themes are ranked according to the percentage of discourse segments in which they occur. Overall percentages are derived from combined documentary and meeting data.

Another distinctive dimension of Eastern Catawba's *social* landscape is reflected in the relative prominence of *justice* narrative. Throughout POL, the use of this narrative was completely divided along racial lines: it was only used by African Americans in Eastern Catawba and once by a Mexican farmworker in Western Rowan. The complete absence of this narrative from the discourse of white project participants suggests that the hegemonic ethnic group and marginalized ethnic groups may construct the same landscapes in distinct ways.

The passages in Tables 3.10 and 3.11 illustrate how the *justice* narrative can intersect with *social* and *natural resource* narratives, respectively. These particular excerpts address two topics that come up frequently when talking about place with Eastern Catawbans of any race: camp meeting and the impoundment of Lake Norman. Camp meeting has already been introduced (see Sections 2.5.3 and 3.2.2), but discussion of Lake Norman warrants a little background.

Duke Power (now Duke Energy) impounded the Catawba River to create the lake, which, upon completion in 1963, became "the largest manmade body of fresh water in North Carolina" (Duke Energy 2007). Duke's acquisition of land to create this vast reservoir displaced large numbers of landowners in the four surrounding counties, including Catawba. Indeed, the entire mill village of Long Island was removed. After the lake was filled, Duke owned much of the shoreline. These extensive tracts were transferred to Duke's real-estate subsidiary, Crescent Resources, which has devoted itself in recent decades to subdividing the land for residential development. Many Eastern Catawbans are incensed that Duke, which used eminent domain to cheaply and unilaterally wrest property from local residents, is now selling the same property for top dollar as lakefront lots (Figure 3.27).

Passage	***Type***
[Camp meeting is] a spiritual thing. It's a friend thing. It's--, I don't know, you're just dedicated to it.	1, A, Social, *Religious*
It's a thing that people have a love for. And I think that must have started out with-- Black people as a rule didn't have lakes they could go to and cottages in the mountain… at that time. When you stop and think, we have been deprived of so much, until you can't even imagine it, because you have to say, "walk in my shoes."	2, H, Social, Justice

Table 3.10. Passages from interview with Naomi White-Huitt. Each excerpt is coded as to which narrative types it represents. The types of interest are listed first, followed by other types in italics.

Passage	*Type*
Everybody wants to know where the homeplace was at. You know, when Lake Norman came through here, it took a bunch of the good land under water, and everybody still—they may stay gone five, six, ten years—but they all still want to know if that's where the old home place used to be at. And that's the thing I think it always will be.	1, H, y, L, Natural resource, Justice, *3, Genealogical*
You know money is the root of all evil anyway, you know. And they thought, you know, well a lot of people had the idea that, thought they were going to get-rich-quick deals on land and stuff, you know, and Duke Power come through and you know, give them a couple of dollars an acre for land and knowed all the time what was going on, you know, and that's what happened [with that generation.]	1, H, y, L, Justice, *3*

Table 3.11. Passages from interview with Spencer Graham. Each excerpt is coded as to which narrative types it represents. The types of interest are listed first, followed by other types in italics.

Figure 3.27. One of many new homes on the shore of Lake Norman. Photo by Alan Chester.

Figure 3.28. Naomi White-Huitt.

Neither of these examples include a coda; the speakers simply set out to expose the past, without looking toward the future. In general, arriving at a coherent future

vision proved difficult in this large, diverse community; other than the existing Small Area Planning process, no specific collective initiatives or management actions emerged from the project. At the same time, the sense of place articulated by Naomi White-Huitt (Figure 3.28), Spencer Graham, and other community members was exceptionally rich and nuanced. Indeed, given the complexity of the discursive landscape in Eastern Catawba, it is quite plausible that we were all too busy making sense of the past to leave much time for grappling with the future.

White-Huitt's passages above constitute not so much a narrative as an appraisal—of camp meeting and, by extension, the social landscape. Beginning with evaluation, she appreciates the simultaneously religious and social institution that is camp meeting (McKenzie Grove, in this case). Then, in the second passage, her tone becomes critical as she uses rationalization to explain the historical importance of camp meeting: it was a rare oasis of African-American control in the landscape. She ends by addressing the audience, asserting that "you can't even imagine" what African-Americans of her generation endured. This challenge is directed both at me (her young, white interviewer) and at the world in general.

Graham's style is more oblique, but the effects of power inequities on the landscape are just as clearly conveyed. Again, the issue is control: in this case, the loss of control over "good land" that had been life and livelihood for local people. Duke Power asserted its vision of natural resource management over that of rural community members. According to Graham and White-Huitt, African-Americans were disproportionately impacted by the creation of Lake Norman, because they were disproportionately likely to farm in the bottomland. This displacement was cited as a

local impetus for many to join the national out-migration of African Americans to the urban Northeast Corridor. Nonetheless, family members remain loyal to their roots: they return for camp meeting each fall and inquire about that anchor of the genealogical landscape, the "homeplace."

As Graham's story reveals, the creation of Lake Norman and the resultant development represents such a profound transformation of the landscape that residents of Eastern Catawba could be said to occupy two landscapes. The first landscape is inhabited only by those whose sense of place was established before the creation of the lake. These long-time residents see themselves as part of a rural farming community, one of many like it across the region. Their sense of geography, distance, and identity encompasses landmarks and networks that are now physically and cognitively submerged. The second landscape is inhabited by people who have moved into the area since the lake was created. These in-migrants see themselves as living in "Lake Norman," a community defined by and centered on the lake. Place names such as *Long Island* may not even be meaningful to these lake residents, who are more likely to associate the name with New York.

As in Stanley Creek, then, the locals in this community share a sense of place that has proved more enduring than the place itself. As such, this collective memory may itself prove the most important resource for the community to steward as it shapes its future. Michelle Deese expressed this realization most concisely at the Eastern Catawba community meeting: "I think [this project] caused us to reflect on our past and make us think about our future…. [It] certainly made us feel like we do have to think about our future now…. I think the preservation of open space and of our heritage, we realized

how important that is. I don't know that we know all the steps we need to take, but we realized that they are important and they need to be taken care of now."

3.4.3. Western Rowan

The project discourse from western Rowan County is unique among the POL projects, because speakers provided orientation much more often through *affinity* than through *heritage* (see Table 3.12). This may seem surprising, since the Western Rowan project participants, like those in the other community projects, were predominantly locals. Why were these community members describing their connection to place through the *lingua franca* of *affinity*? The answer lies in the fact that most of the Western Rowan participants were farmers talking about farmland, and they were describing the land through that most universalizing of value systems: economics. For the same reason, *evaluation* and *rationalization* were favored over *mythopoesis*.

Function	***Perspective***	***Documentary (%)***	***Meeting (%)***	***Overall (%)***
Legitimation	1. evaluation	49.12	38.46	45.78
	2. rationalization	33.33	34.62	33.7
	3. mythopoesis	19.3	23.08	20.48
Orientation	H. heritage	17.54	7.69	14.46
	A. affinity	63.15	7.69	45.78
Complication	y. change	12.28	3.85	9.64
	n. continuity	0	0	0
Result	L. loss	12.28	0	8.43
	G. gain	0	0	0
	I. inevitability	0	3.85	1.2
Coda	#. collective	22.81	96.15	45.78
	*. individual	3.51	3.85	3.61

Table 3.12. Representation of functional narrative types in discourse data from the Western Rowan community project. Figures indicate the percentage of discourse segments that feature a given functional element. Overall percentages are derived from the combined documentary and meeting data.

From this profile we can begin to discern the eminently practical discourse of modern farming. Many Western Rowan farmers, just like the participants in the other

community projects, have a connection to the local landscape that is generations deep. However, they believe—or appear to believe—that they should not appraise their land's value primarily on the basis of this heritage, but on its ability to yield crops that will make them a living. It is profitability, after all, that enables them to remain on the land at all. Farmers do not value place only in economic terms, though, as we will see below.

Despite being seemingly resigned to dog-eat-dog economic realities, Western Rowan project participants were also amenable to working together. Twenty-three percent of the discourse segments in the documentary called for collective action—considerably more than in any other POL community. This figure jumped to 46 percent for the overall project, a reflection of the movement-building that Adele Goodman spearheaded at the public meeting.

The thematic narrative frequencies from Western Rowan largely confirm the picture painted by the functional breakdown (see Table 3.13). Valuation of place in economic terms was preeminent, both in the documentary and the overall project. The prototypical string for a Western Rowan narrative is *2AyL#/economic.*

In the documentary, the *economic* narrative was matched by talk of *land use*, which is fitting considering that farmers' economic fortunes depend on their land use decisions. Together, these two themes account for more than half of the interview excerpts. In the overall project, *land use* is supplanted is supplanted by discussion of *policy* and *movement*—the latter rising dramatically in rank from 10 to 3. Again, this is due to the galvanizing effect of the public meeting. Through the record of this project, it is possible to directly observe the transformation of Western Rowan community members from a collection of dissociated individuals into a united constituency.

Documentary			*Meeting*			*Overall*		
Rank	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***
1.	Economic	26.32	1.	Movement	61.54	1.	Economic	25.30
1.	Land use	26.32	2.	Policy	53.85	2.	Policy	24.10
2.	Nat. resource	21.05	3.	Economic	23.08	3.	Movement	20.48
3.	Farm. lifestyle	19.30	4.	Social	15.38	4.	Land use	19.28
3.	Farm. practice	19.30	5.	Conservation	11.54	5.	Nat. resource	16.87
4.	Social	14.04	5.	Risk	11.54	6.	Farm. practice	14.46
5.	Conservation	12.28	6.	Cultivation	7.69	6.	Social	14.46
5.	Emotive	12.28	6.	Genealogical	7.69	7.	Farm. lifestyle	13.25
5.	Risk	12.28	6.	Nat. resource	7.69	8.	Risk	12.05
6.	Policy	10.53	6.	Property	7.69	9.	Conservation	12.05
6.	Spatial	10.53	6.	Tourism	7.69	10.	Cultivation	8.43
7.	Cultivation	8.77	7.	Amenity	3.85	10.	Emotive	8.43
7.	Development	8.77	7.	Cultural	3.85	10.	Spatial	8.43
7.	Farm. prof.	8.77	7.	Development	3.85	11.	Development	7.23
8.	Aesthetic	5.26	7.	Environmental	3.85	12.	Farm. prof.	6.02
8.	Genealogical	5.26	7.	Farm. practice	3.85	12.	Genealogical	6.02
8.	Independence	5.26	7.	Independence	3.85	12.	Tourism	6.02
8.	Negative	5.26	7.	Land use	3.85	13.	Independence	4.82
8.	Outdoor exp.	5.26	7.	Negative	3.85	13.	Negative	4.82
8.	Religious	5.26	7.	Spatial	3.85	13.	Property	4.82
8.	Tourism	5.26				14.	Aesthetic	3.61
8.	Unique	5.26				14.	Cultural	3.61
9.	Cultural	3.51				14.	Outdoor exp.	3.61
9.	Property	3.51				14.	Religious	3.61
10.	Access	1.75				14.	Unique	3.61
10.	Amenity	1.75				15.	Amenity	2.41
10.	Environmental	1.75				15.	Environmental	2.41
10.	Hazard	1.75				16.	Access	1.20
10.	Justice	1.75				16.	Hazard	1.20
10.	Life course	1.75				16.	Justice	1.20
10.	Movement	1.75				16.	Life course	1.20
10.	Outsider	1.75				16.	Outsider	1.20

Table 3.13. Ranking of thematic narrative types found in Western Rowan discourse data. Thirty-two narratives types occurred in the documentary and the overall project; 20 occurred in the meeting. Themes are ranked according to the percentage of discourse segments in which they occur. Overall percentages are derived from combined documentary and meeting data.

The economic narrative is captured well in the words of Frank Tadlock (Table 3.14; see also Figure 2.2), a community member who was a Rowan County Commissioner at the time.

Passage	*Type*
We can't really preserve farmland without preserving the farmer.	2, A, Economic, *Land use, Policy, Conservation, Farming practice*
I'm for preserving the farmer, if we can preserve the farmer where he could make a living and support his family that's pretty equal to what you can make in the municipality, then that's one way. But that's gonna never happen without a lot of financial support directly towards subsidizing farmers. But I think with the farmland trust, development rights, that has some potential if we can just figure out how to fund that.	2, A, #, Economic, **, Policy, Conservation, Risk*

Table 3.14. Passages from interview with Frank Tadlock. Each excerpt is coded as to which narrative types it represents. The types of interest are listed first, followed by other types in italics.

Tadlock's remarks capture most of the narrative elements that typify this community's discourse. He relies on *rationalization* to convince us of the logic behind his arguments. He acknowledges the value of farmers and farmland, but makes it clear that both can only survive if they are economically viable—which will require subsidies. Certain policy and conservation tools, he suggests, may be helpful, but they too depend on financial support. Tadlock manages to support collective action toward farmland preservation while simultaneously affirming the individualistic market forces that oppose such preservation.

While Tadlock's equivocation fits the stereotype of a politician, he is not alone in supporting both the need for collective responsibility and the logic of market capitalism: this tension runs through much of the discourse from Western Rowan and, indeed, all the project communities. Farmer Robert Knox (Figure 3.29), however, observed in his interview that these two imperatives are not necessarily opposed: "the independence of farmers is one reason that farmers work so cheaply…. At some point, I think that the farmers could get their heads together." The mobilization that began in the Western

Rowan project proceeded from the realization that by cooperating, farmers could gain collective bargaining power and benefit economically.

Figure 3.29. Robert Knox and son check whether a hay crop is dry.

Figure 3.30. Bill Wetmore (rear) and three generations of his family.

Farming is not simply a matter of economic logic, though, as Bill Wetmore (Figure 3.30) acknowledged: "We could have done about anything and made more… than [we] did farming, but it wouldn't have been as nice." The reality is that most current farmers could have chosen easier and more lucrative careers, so clearly they are not motivated by income alone. As David Correll put it, "You just have to enjoy it, enjoy watching things grow…. The risks come with it, but it's a lifestyle." The compensations of the *farming lifestyle* constitute a quiet but persistent counterpoint to the problem-oriented thrust of Western Rowan discourse.

These two portrayals of farming—as a job and as a lifestyle—correspond to the competing portrayals of the farmer as self-interested businessman versus selfless land steward. These contrasting representations have been used to advance the causes of farmworker advocates and conservationists, respectively. I would argue, however, that both views are partial: Western Rowan farmers are both capitalists and land stewards, with all the internal dissonance that such hybridity implies.

Figure 3.31. Guillermo de Jesus Jimenez Rodriguez (rear).

Figure 3.32. Francisca Sola and family.

The discourse of the farmworkers themselves can also reflect both of these perspectives. Guillermo de Jesus Jimenez Rodriguez (Figure 3.31), a farmworker on Randall and Doug Patterson's farm, framed his connection to the land and his own sense of self-worth in economic terms: "Nuestro trabajo, valoramos eso... pa'lo que venimos es el trabajar... y pues, no nos sentimos inferiores, a las, por hacer asi, a la demas gente. [what we value is the work. We value what we came here to do, which is to work. And we don't feel inferior to, so to speak, to the rest of the people.]" On the other hand, Francisca Sola, whose family works on the Correll farm (Figure 3.32), observed that "aquí está muy bonito. Sí. Y ese tiempito que viene, que todo reverdece, árboles. Y nosotros trabajamos aquí en el arbor del tomate, viera que bonito se ve cuando es un escuadro llenito de, de la planta, pues, que los señores siembren. Bien bonito. [It's beautiful here. In the season that's coming, when everything turns green again—the trees. We work here in the tomato fields, and you should see how beautiful it is among the plots of plants that the men sow. Very beautiful!]" Throughout the community, then,

the landscape is valued for its contributions to both livelihood and quality of life.

3.4.4. Uwharries

Discourse took yet another form in the Uwharries project. Of all the project participants, Uwharrie residents had the greatest propensity for storytelling: *mythopoesis* legitimated approximately half the speech in both the documentary and the overall project. There was an accompanying preference for *heritage* over *affinity* as an orientation. Uwharrie community members also evinced a wider range of opinion regarding change and its consequences than did participants in the other communities: this was the only project, for example, in which some doubt was expressed as to whether change was happening at all. While speakers mostly saw change as bringing loss, there were some who perceived it as a positive or neutral force. Finally, there was some debate as to whether resource management was the responsibility of the community or the individual.

Function	***Perspective***	***Documentary (%)***	***Meeting (%)***	***Overall (%)***
Legitimation	1. evaluation	27.96	16.67	25.2
	2. rationalization	20.43	53.33	28.46
	3. mythopoesis	52.69	30	47.15
Orientation	H. heritage	46.24	16.67	39.02
	A. affinity	19.36	30	21.95
Complication	y. change	36.56	30	34.95
	n. continuity	4.3	0	3.25
Result	L. loss	18.28	26.67	20.33
	G. gain	8.6	3.33	7.32
	I. inevitability	2.15	6.67	3.25
Coda	#. collective	9.7	50	19.51
	*. individual	2.15	10	4.07

Table 3.15. Representation of functional narrative types in discourse data from the Uwharries community project. Figures indicate the percentage of discourse segments that feature a given functional element. Overall percentages are derived from the combined documentary and meeting data.

In these patterns, I see the discourse of a community that is still rural—more rural than any of the other project communities. Land development is certainly underway in the Uwharries, but it has thus far been largely confined to the shores of the Yadkin-Pee Dee lakes, and much of the area has experienced little growth thus far. Consequently, there has been less certainty about what change would look like, what its consequences would be, and whether or not it would need to be addressed collectively. Uwharries residents conveyed a largely negative impression of change, based in their generally negative assessment of changes that have already occurred, e.g. the decline of farming, the decline of manufacturing and timber jobs, the replacement of mixed hardwood forests with pine plantations, and the influx of outdoor recreation enthusiasts. However, there were those who saw in change the potential for much-needed employment. There were also those who were suspicious of collective responses to change, believing instead that individual property owners should be able to respond to change in their own ways.

More than in any other POL community, Uwharries residents talked about place in terms of resource management: the *natural resource* theme and its geographic analog, *land use*, were reflected in 75 percent of the documentary and 63 percent of the overall project discourse (see Table 3.16). Unlike Western Rowan, however, this consumptive relationship to place is couched in *mythopoesis* and *heritage*. The prototypical Uwharrie narrative string is *3HyL#/natural resource*.

Documentary			*Meeting*			*Overall*		
Rank	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***
1.	Nat. resource	50.54	1.	Nat. resource	30.00	1.	Nat. resource	41.46
2.	Land use	24.73	2.	Policy	26.67	2.	Land use	21.95
3.	Economic	20.43	2.	Spatial	26.67	3.	Economic	19.51
3.	Historical	20.43	3.	Land use	23.33	4.	Social	17.07
4.	Social	17.20	4.	Conservation	20.00	5.	Spatial	16.26
5.	Life course	16.13	4.	Economic	20.00	6.	Historical	15.45
6.	Farm. practice	12.90	4.	Negative	20.00	7.	Genealogical	14.63
6.	Genealogical	12.90	5.	Farm. practice	16.67	8.	Farm. practice	13.82
6.	Recreational	12.90	5.	Genealogical	16.67	9.	Life course	13.01
6.	Spatial	12.90	5.	Property	16.67	10.	Recreational	9.76
7.	Memory	7.53	5.	Social	16.67	11.	Negative	8.13
7.	Rural	7.53	6.	Development	13.33	12.	Property	7.32
8.	Access	6.45	7.	Aesthetic	10.00	13.	Aesthetic	6.50
8.	Amenity	6.45	8.	Class	6.67	13.	Rural	6.50
8.	Negative	6.45	8.	Culture	6.67	14.	Amenity	5.69
9.	Aesthetic	5.38	8.	Independence	6.67	14.	Development	5.69
9.	Environmental	5.38	8.	Movement	6.67	14.	Memory	5.69
9.	Property	5.38	8.	Outsider	6.67	15.	Access	4.88
9.	Self-sufficien.	5.38	9.	Amenity	3.33	15.	Cultural	4.88
9.	Sensory	5.38	9.	Emotive	3.33	15.	Policy	4.88
10.	Cultural	4.30	9.	Infrastructure	3.33	16.	Environmental	4.07
10.	Knowledge	4.30	9.	Life course	3.33	16.	Risk	4.07
10.	Outdoor exp.	4.30	9.	Recreational	3.33	16.	Self-sufficien.	4.07
10.	Risk	4.30	9.	Religious	3.33	16.	Sensory	4.07
10.	Unique	4.30	9.	Risk	3.33	17.	Conservation	3.25
11.	Cultivation	3.23	9.	Rural	3.33	17.	Emotive	3.25
11.	Development	3.23				17.	Knowledge	3.25
11.	Emotive	3.23				17.	Movement	3.25
12.	Biodiversity	2.15				17.	Outdoor exp.	3.25
12.	Independence	2.15				17.	Unique	3.25
12.	Movement	2.15				18.	Cultivation	2.44
13.	Conservation	1.08				18.	Independence	2.44
13.	Demographic	1.08				19.	Biodiversity	1.63
13.	Ecological	1.08				19.	Class	1.63
13.	Farm. lifestyle	1.08				19.	Infrastructure	1.63
13.	Farm. prof.	1.08				19.	Outsider	1.63
13.	Infrastructure	1.08				19.	Religious	1.63
13.	Outsider	1.08				20.	Demographic	0.81
13.	Peace & quiet	1.08				20.	Ecological	0.81
13.	Policy	1.08				20.	Farm. lifestyle	0.81
13.	Religious	1.08				20.	Farm. prof.	0.81
						20.	Peace & quiet	0.81

Table 3.16. Ranking of thematic narrative types found in Uwharries discourse data. Forty-one narratives types occurred in the documentary, 26 in the meeting, and 42 in the overall project. Themes are ranked according to the percentage of discourse segments in which they occur. Overall percentages are derived from combined documentary and meeting data.

The use of storytelling to address natural resource management is illustrated in Table 3.17. In these selections, Bobby Hall addresses a contentious local issue: the entry of outside hunters into the local landscape.

Passage	***Type***
When I was growing up, we all had our own little squirrel dog, rabbit dog, hound dog that'd do everything from tree coons to rabbits to squirrels, you know, and we'd just hunt. We didn't pay any attention where a property line was and the neighbors didn't either—I mean we'd just start out hunting, we'd just hunt in the area, we'd just go where we wanted to, you know, and the neighbors did the same.	3, H, Natural Resource, *Life course, Property, Social, Cultural, Spatial*
As farming went out, people who had the farm land, if they still owned it as farms, you know, they've got a pretty fair tax bill to pay. And I can understand 'em wanting to get a little something out of it. And so they'll lease it to hunters, you know, to hunting clubs. And when you lease it, you know, you're leasing the hunting rights, but also, there goes the rights of your neighbors, you know, because if you're a hunter, if you lease it and you pay, you don't want somebody else on it when you come down here and that's understandable, 'cause you paying for it and that's for your club. So, that's what, you know, you can't say that the neighbor don't want me hunting on his land, but by leasing it, in essence, that's what it's done.	3, y, L, Natural resource, *Historical, Property, Economic, Social, Access*

Table 3.17. Passages from interview with Bobby Hall. Each excerpt is coded as to which narrative types it represents. The types of interest are listed first, followed by other types in italics.

Hall's story follows a quintessential narrative progression. It begins with an *orientation*, in which he establishes his perspective as a lifelong resident of the area and explains the way hunting used to take place there. In the second passage, he presents the *complication*—the decline of farming and landowners' need for another revenue stream—and the *result*—the leasing of property to hunt clubs and the consequent restriction of locals' hunting access. He ends with a *coda* that recapitulates his message—though this is not a coda in the sense that I have used the term throughout the POL analysis, i.e. a vision or proposed solution to a problem. Codas in this latter sense

are relatively rare in the documentary, reflecting most Uwharries interviewees' orientation toward the past, rather than the future.

In these passages, Hall describes a sequence of events that was mentioned repeatedly in the Uwharries and in Macon County (see Section 4.5): enclosure of what I would term an "informal commons." In these rural landscapes, and probably many others, it was understood that community members could freely cross each other's property. This practice was often associated with the pursuit of small game, such as rabbits or foxes. The property in question was definitely privately owned, and community members had no formal contract permitting access; nonetheless, unwritten understandings enabled the land to be used as a commons. In effect, community members had certain *access rights* and *withdrawal rights* (Ostrom and Schlager 1996): they could use others' properties for hunting or traversing on foot.

Figure 3.33. Hunters at the Eldorado Outpost convenience store.

The arrival of outsiders in the landscape over the course of recent decades has precipitated the gradual enclosure and disappearance of these commons for a number of reasons. If property is leased to hunt clubs, as Hall described, then usufruct hunting rights are privatized, becoming a commodity with a monetary value. Under this new

management regime, hunting across property lines is reconceived as theft, since it involves appropriating for free the rights for which others have paid.

Even if the enclosure process is not so overt, outsider influx erodes the commons in a more pervasive way: through the diminishment of social solidarity. Project participants have cited two main reasons for this. One is that locals do not trust outsiders, and so they do not want them crossing their property; they were only comfortable with locals doing so. The other is that outsiders come from places where property boundaries are more rigidly enforced, so when they buy land in the area they do not permit others to use it. Typically, both factors probably play a role. In any case, the result is a landscape dotted with *No Trespassing* signs, in which access is restricted and neighbors are strangers to each other.

The informal commons that many project participants recall challenges the stereotype of rural North Carolinians as entrenched and rabid defenders of their private property. Instead, it seems that the posting of property boundaries is, in many cases, a relatively recent response to a privatization trend initiated by outsiders. The subtleties of community resource management traditions are obscured by the hegemonic policy discourse on property in the United States, which recognizes only public and private ownership. The informal commons described by Hall and others were neither public nor private: they were communal, meaning that they were not open to everyone, just community members. When the social homogeneity and continuity that supported these informal institutions is disrupted, rural communities have to figure out ways to manage their landscapes through the artificial legal dichotomy of public versus private.

An important lesson to take from the history of the informal commons is that rural communities, such as the one where the Uwharries project took place, are not liberal democracies: different rights are accorded to different groups of people. In other words, community members are concerned not only with *how* resources are being used, but with *who* is using them. Locals were allowed to cross each other's property freely, but outsiders would not have been welcome to do so. When outsiders started entering the landscape, the whole system began to fall apart. As residents of rural communities consider their landscapes' future, there is an ongoing debate about how much control should be ceded to outsiders.

In the Uwharries, this debate revolves around recreation and tourism. Given the considerable natural beauty of the landscape and the presence of the National Forest, Uwharries booster organizations have been promoting the area as an outdoor recreation destination.[23] They see this as the most viable economic development strategy for the region, and many locals agree—they are eager to help separate tourists from their money. On the other hand, in the course of my work in the Uwharries, I have sensed considerable reluctance among Uwharrie residents about staking their livelihoods on tourism. For one thing, the spending habits of tourist may seem fickle and unproven—not a solid income source. A more deep-seated source of uneasiness, though, is the concern that Uwharrie residents could become second-class citizens in their own landscape, simply catering to outsiders' wishes. Many community members have had unpleasant encounters with disrespectful outsiders: both Hall and Leonard Simmons, for example, reported incidents in which outsider hunters had tried to run them off of their own properties. These

[23] For example, the Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes project has billed the Uwharrie region as "North Carolina's Central Park," a recreation hub for the residents of the state's surrounding urban areas (Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project 2007).

confrontations reinforce misgivings about inviting "foreigners" into the community—outsiders who will not and cannot understand the *heritage* bond between locals and the land.

In the preceding sections I have attempted to introduce the discourse from each of the four POL community projects. I have summarized the narrative diversity that characterized each project, and I have explored some salient issues that were voiced by the participants: the genealogical landscape, sites of justice and injustice, the hybridity of modern farming, and the enclosure of the informal commons. These examples demonstrate how discourse research can yield insights into rural community dynamics that can inform resource management strategies. Obviously, I have only pursued a few avenues of inquiry within the rich discursive data of POL; many others could be productively explored. Now I will consider the distribution of discursive phenomena across the community projects.

3.5. Beta diversity in POL discourse

In the preceding sections, I cataloged the number and abundances of the narrative types that I found in each POL community project, which can be seen as measuring the alpha diversity (α) of that project's discourse. Now I will examine differences among the discursive compositions of the various community projects, i.e. beta diversity (β).

The variation represented by beta diversity can be conceptualized in different ways, and there is no consensus as to how it should be measured—Koleff, Gaston, and Lennon (2003) reviewed twenty-four distinct formulae that have been used in assessing species diversity. A key debate centers around whether beta diversity should 1) simply

reflect the variability among the sites (grains) within a study area without regard to the sites' locations, or 2) should reflect turnover in composition "along predefined spatial or environmental gradients" (Vellend 2001: 545). In my analysis, I have conceived of this distinction in different terms—as a distinction between beta diversity across the *discursive landscape* and variation across the *biophysical landscape*. The former refers to the internal variation of the project's discourse, while the latter considers how discursive variations relate to variations in the physical environments that interlocutors inhabit. As we shall see, the distribution of data in discursive space can be quite different from its distribution in biophysical space; therefore, the two measures can yield distinct insights into the discursive variations among communities. I will consider beta diversity in both contexts below.

3.5.1. Beta diversity across the discursive landscape of POL

To gain a basic, non-spatial understanding of the discursive variation among the POL community projects, Whittaker's classic formulation of beta diversity (Whittaker 1960) can be used:

$$\beta_W = \frac{\gamma}{\overline{\alpha}}$$

This measure of beta diversity is obtained by dividing the average alpha diversity of the sites ($\overline{\alpha}$) into the total diversity (γ). The POL discursive measure that is most amenable for use in this calculation is the simple richness (number) of thematic narratives. I identified fifty thematic narrative types in the POL data. On average, thirty-six (35.5) of those types appeared in each community project. Based on these figures, POL's beta diversity for thematic narratives (β_W) is 1.41.

This numeric value of beta diversity is not very meaningful on its own, but the exercise does reveal something important about the scaling of the POL discourse: most of the thematic narrative variability occurred within the communities, not among them. In other words, a researcher could encounter a majority of these thematic narratives by studying just one of these communities: the least narrative-rich project, Eastern Catawba, included 29 of the types (see Figure 3.34).

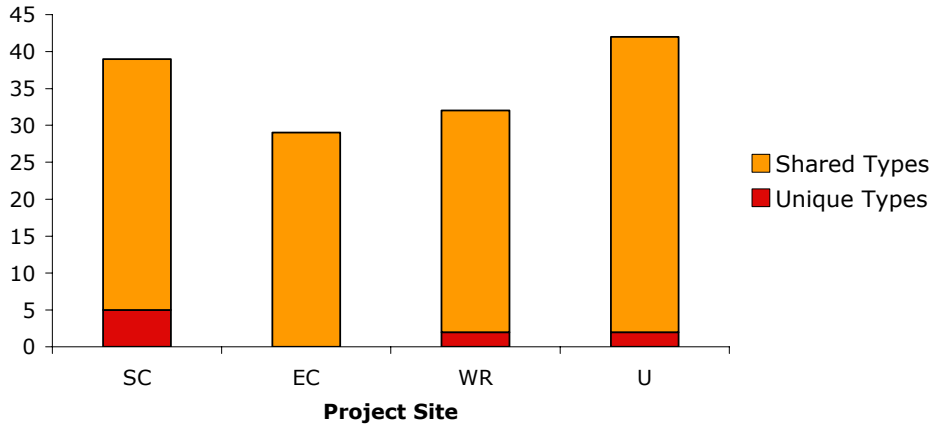


Figure 3.34. Number of narrative types identified in discourse data from each POL community project.

On the other hand, since the most narrative-rich project (Uwharries) included only 42 narrative types, it would have been impossible to capture the full narrative richness of the project by sampling just one community. As Figure 3.35 shows, only 19 of the thematic narrative types were actually observed in all four community projects, while 9 types were only observed at one site. Project discourse from Stanley Creek, Western Rowan, and the Uwharries all contained unique narrative types. Based on this assessment, research in those three communities, at a minimum, was necessary to encounter the full range of narratives described by the project.

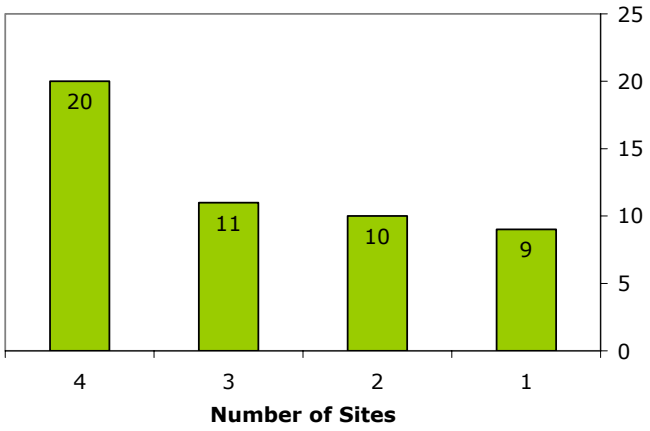


Figure 3.35. Number of POL project sites in which thematic narrative types occurred.

Calculating overall beta-diversity does not tell us how compositionally different the various community discourses are. A different kind of beta-diversity measure is useful for this purpose: one that assesses (dis)similarity between pairs of sites. One such measure is a Jaccard's coefficient:[24]

$$\beta_j = \frac{a}{\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 - a}$$

In this equation, α_1 and α_2 represent the total number of thematic narrative types represented in the data from each of two community projects; *a* represents the number of thematic narrative types found in both projects (Jaccard 1912; Koleff, Gaston, and Lennon 2003). A value of β_j can thus be calculated for each pair of project sites. Subtracting β_j from 1 yields a dissimilarity coefficient, which represents the compositional "distance" between sites. In Figure 3.36 below, I have used Jaccard's dissimilarity coefficients to "map" the relative compositional distances among the four POL community projects.

[24] I am using Jaccard's coefficient here in order to be consistent with the cluster analysis in Section 3.6, in which Jaccard's coefficient is used to calculate a dissimilarity matrix. This coefficient is particularly appropriate for use with asymmetric presence-absence (binary) data (SAS Institute 2004, Vellend 2001).

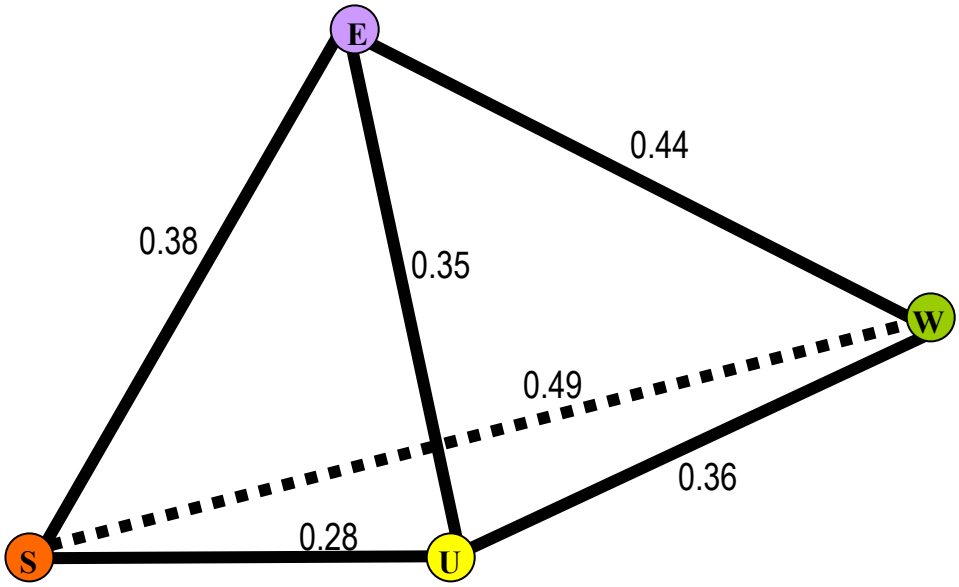


Figure 3.36. A simple "map" of the discursive landscape: compositional dissimilarities among POL project sites. Length of lines represents size of Jaccard's dissimilarity coefficient. All lines are to scale except line SW (dotted), which has been distorted in this projection. All relative line lengths are accurate. Data: presence/absence of thematic narrative types in discourse from each community project.

Mapping the hyper-dimensional composition space occupied by the four projects requires projecting that space in two dimensions. As cartographers have discovered when creating maps of the globe, two-dimensional projection of spaces that occupy three or more dimensions requires some kind of distortion. In Figure 3.b, I achieved a two-dimensional projection by distorting the length of line SW (dotted), which represents the compositional distance between Stanley Creek and Western Rowan. This enabled me to depict all of the other lines at a consistent scale, while accurately maintaining the relative lengths of all the lines (SW is the longest line).

As is evident from the map, the discursive landscape represented here is markedly different from the biophysical landscape of the POL region. Western Rowan, not the Uwharries, is the outlier. It is also interesting that Stanley Creek and the Uwharries,

whose biophysical landscapes are furthest apart in terms of urbanization, lie closest together here. In interpreting these relationships, it is helpful to consider the identities of the participants in each community project. Most of the participants in the Western Rowan project were farmers, and, as discussed earlier, they had a distinctive, practical way of talking about place; that distinctiveness is evident here. Many of the participants in the other communities had farmed or were from farming families, but they were much less likely to be actively engaged in cultivating their land. This demographic difference reflects the overall populations of the project sites: as of the 2000 US Census, the farm population of Western Rowan was 635, while the second-highest farm population (Eastern Catawba) was only 291. In Stanley Creek and the Uwharries, full-time farming is largely just a memory. Some farming still takes place in Eastern Catawba, but the diversity of participant perspectives represented in that project make its compositional location harder to interpret.

The distinctiveness of the Western Rowan project's narrative composition suggests the discursive significance of an active farming community, but the size of the farming population should not be confused with the degree to which the communities' landscapes are "rural" or "working." By many measures, some of which will be discussed explicitly in Section 3.5.2, the Uwharries area represents a more extensive rural, working landscape than Western Rowan. However, much of the "working land" in the Uwharries is forested and thus much less labor-intensive. As a result, far fewer of the Uwharries project participants were professionally involved in land cultivation, and this is reflected in the discourse.

Bear in mind that the beta-diversity measures performed in this section offer only a partial view of the discursive variation among the POL community projects. They incorporate only thematic narrative types, and therefore do not reflect the distribution of functional narrative types. Also, they consider only the *richness*, and not the *abundances*, of narratives. In the next section I introduce a different approach to beta diversity, measuring turnover in narrative type abundance across the biophysical landscape.

3.5.2. Beta diversity across the biophysical landscape of POL

As Figure 3.36 suggested, compositional dissimilarity among POL community projects does not necessarily increase as a function of physical distance. Distance is not the only environmental gradient across which narrative turnover can be calculated, however; in this section, discursive variation is measured against different kinds of variation in the biophysical landscape.

Perhaps the most salient environmental gradients in the POL region reflect changes in land use—changes that reflect the ecological and economic transition of communities and landscapes from rural to urban. Traditionally, rural communities in the United States were characterized as economically dependent on locally-available natural resources. The resource-dependence of rural populations has declined, however, and so, accordingly, has the accuracy of this characterization (McGranahan 1999, Brown and Swanson 2003). This economic change has been accompanied by changes in land use. Drawing upon the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), Jackson-Smith identifies two main national trends in rural land use change between 1982 and 1997: 1) "conversion of all types of rural lands into urbanized or other developed

uses," and 2) "the deintensification of rural lands, particularly the conversion of agricultural lands into forest cover" (2003: 307).

Of these two trends, the former is more pronounced in the POL region, as evidenced by trend data from the same time period (Table 3.18).

Land Use	Acreage Change
Forest	-161,000
Pasture	84,600
Cropland	-242,100
Urban	300,600

Table 3.18. Acreage change of land use types in the POL region, 1982-97.[25] Source: NRI data for contiguous twelve-county region, including counties with project sites and intervening counties.

Both forestland and cropland decreased substantially, while "urban" areas—mostly in the form of suburban sprawl—increased in even more dramatic fashion. I would argue that the concomitant increase in pastureland, meanwhile, does reflect agricultural deintensification, though not the kind noted by Jackson-Smith. Since pasture requires much less labor to manage than cropland, its rise suggests that fewer people in the region are farming full-time. Former farms can be maintained as pasture by people whose primary employment is elsewhere. Since they no longer represent a primary source of income, however, these lands are attractive for development. Rural residents have described pastureland to me as a transitional use, indicating a landscape where farming has declined and sprawl development is imminent.

The POL communities can be arranged along an urban-to-rural gradient that reflects the land use transition described above. The proportion of the landscape that is (sub)urban declines along this gradient, while the proportion represented by "rural" land uses—forestland and cropland—increases. These proportions were derived from county-

[25] 1997 is the most recent year for which NRI data is available at the county level.

level NRI data, so they characterized the landscapes of the entire counties in which each project site is located. The composition of the counties' landscapes does not mirror the composition of the project landscapes themselves; however, county-level data illuminate the landscape contexts in which each project site is located, which also affect the rurality of the communities.

The rural-urban gradient can be enhanced by adding another landscape metric: mean parcel size. The size of property parcels indicates how fragmented land ownership is in a community. Ownership fragmentation, in turn, represents potential land cover fragmentation. In Figure 3.37 below, the four POL project sites are ordered along a gradient of mean parcel size and also characterized by land use percentages. Parcel size is used to construct the gradient because it reflects the landscape of the project sites themselves, rather than the counties.

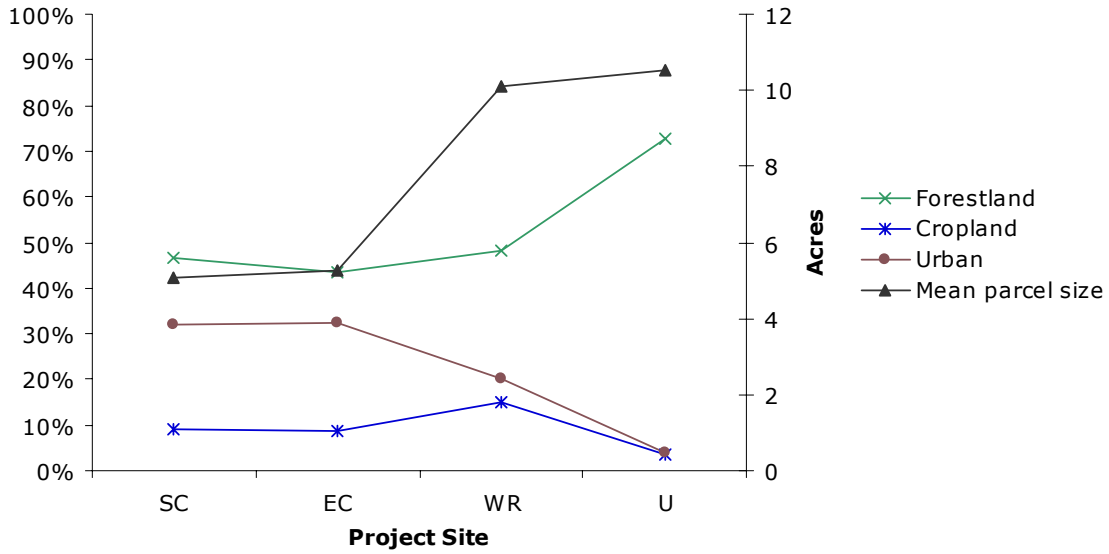


Figure 3.37. Mean parcel size of each project area and land use percentages of each corresponding county. Parcel data source: county tax databases. Land use percentage source: 1997 NRI. Land use percentages for the Uwharries are based on data from Montgomery County rather than Randolph County, since most of the project site falls in that county, and the project site landscape is generally more similar to the Montgomery landscape.

In terms of parcel size, a clear divide can be seen between Stanley Creek and Eastern Catawba, one on hand, and Western Rowan and the Uwharries on the other: the mean parcel sizes of the first two are half as large as those of the second two. Strikingly, however, even the mean size in the Uwharries is only 10.55 acres—an indication of how fragmented even the most remote Piedmont landscapes have become.

Forestland decreases somewhat between Gaston County (Stanley Creek) and Catawba County, rises slightly in Rowan County, and then increases dramatically in Montgomery County (Uwharries), where it makes up 73% of the landscape. Urban land use remains level across Gaston and Catawba, then declines in Rowan and Montgomery. Gaston and Catawba also contain similar proportions of cultivated cropland, which peaks in Rowan (15%) and then declines to its lowest level in Montgomery.

This comparison of land use percentages shows that a rural landscape and a farming landscape are not necessarily the same. Montgomery County has the lowest proportion of cultivated cropland, suggesting that farming is an insignificant presence in the landscape. Nonetheless, due to its extensive forest cover, Montgomery's landscape has the greatest proportion of "rural" land use. Considering the low proportion of urban land (4%) and relatively large mean parcel size, the Uwharries project site can convincingly be said to have the most rural landscape.

In order to meaningfully assess how discourse varied across this urban-rural land use gradient, we must consider how land use and land use change were discussed in the community projects. Based on my experience working with the project communities and analyzing the discourse data, I have identified two general perspectives on land use. From the first perspective, land use is approached in the context of an active, working

landscape: speakers are talking about how they can extract value from natural resources. The second perspective locates land use in a remembered working landscape: speakers recall how natural resources were used in the past but no longer are. From the first perspective, land's value is direct and economic; land is a source of livelihood. From the second perspective, land represents a record of a community's productive past; its value is aesthetic and emotional, rather than practical. Each of these perspectives is manifested in the project discourse through particular thematic narratives, listed Table 3.19. By summing the occurrences of the narratives in these two groups, a measure can be derived for the frequency of the two perspectives, which I have labeled *present* and *past*, respectively.

Present	***Past***
Cultivation	Biodiversity
Farming lifestyle	Ecological
Risk	Naturalist
Independence	Ethical
Land use	Fear
Farming proficiency	Life course
Farming practice	Memory
Economic	Spiritual
Natural resource	Justice
	Conservation
	Genealogical
	Historical
	Aesthetic
	Emotive
	Knowledge
	Self-sufficiency

Table 3.19. Thematic narratives that reflect a *present* or *past* perspective on land use.

To extend the analogy between narratives and species, *present* and *past* could be considered narrative *guilds* (Root 1967), narrative types that are grouped together because of a shared role, not taxonomic similarity. In comparing the occurrences of these two narrative groups across an urban-rural gradient, then, I am measuring beta diversity

through changes in narrative guild abundance: the number of occurrences of the narratives types that make up each guild. In Figure 3.38, abundances of the *present* and *past* narrative guilds are overlaid on the previously-introduced urban-rural gradient.

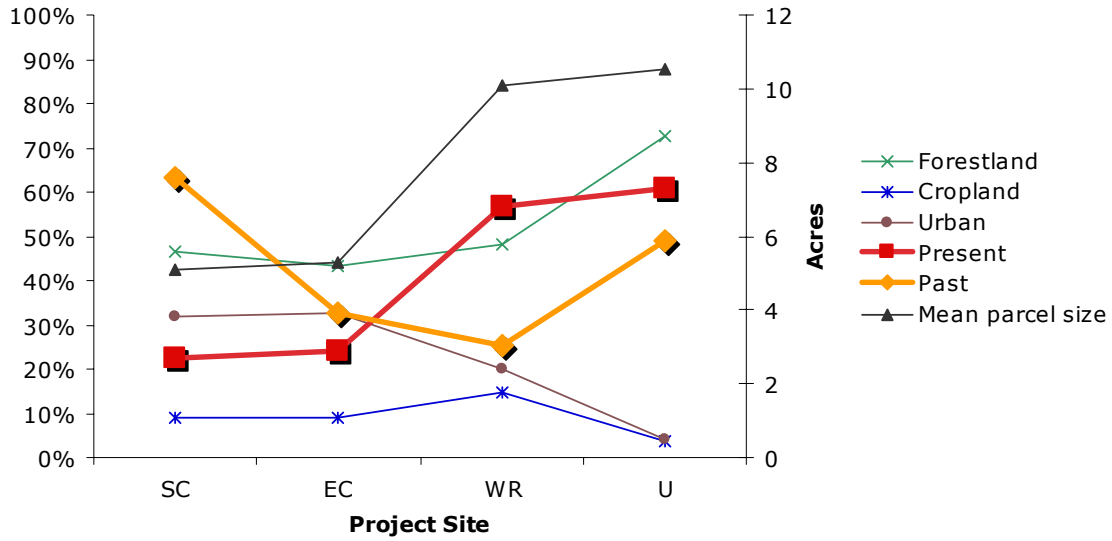


Figure 3.38. Abundance of *present* and *past* narrative guilds across an urban-rural landscape gradient. Abundance = the proportion of discourse segments that feature at least one narrative from a given guild.

Figure 3.38 shows that the abundance of the *present* narrative guild closely parallels the increase in parcel size; this relationship is graphed in Figure 3.39. Project participants in Western Rowan and the Uwharries were much more likely to talk about their environment as an active, working landscape. The *present* perspective was most prevalent in the Uwharries, despite the lack of farming in the area. Uwharries residents, though they may not be full-

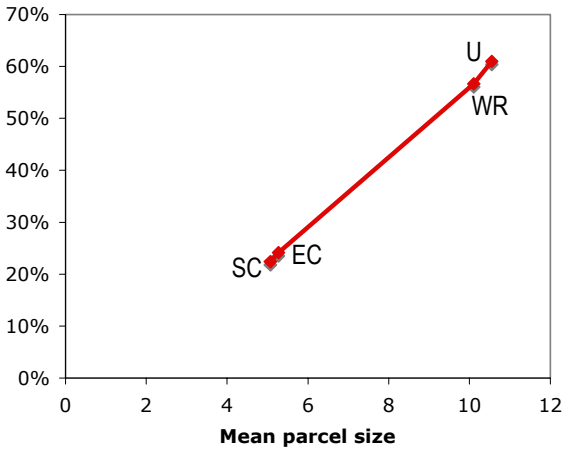


Figure 3.39. Relationship between mean parcel size and abundance of the *present* narrative guild across POL community projects.

time farmers, still exhibit a strong inclination to view their local landscape in terms of natural resource use. The strong association between the prevalence of this perspective and increased parcel size suggests that people are more likely to see land as livelihood in areas where many of them still own enough property to feasibly derive some income from their land. Causality in this case is probably bidirectional: a prevalent *present* perspective on land use in a community could incline community members to keep large parcels intact, which in turn would enable a continued *present* approach to resource management.

The abundance of the *past* narrative guild follows a different trajectory: it begins high in Stanley Creek, then drops in Eastern Catawba and Western Rowan, and finally rises again in the Uwharries. Rather than reflecting a strong association with the rurality of the landscape per se, this perspective exhibits an inverse relationship with the prevalence of farming in the landscape. This relationship is confirmed in Figure 3.40, which measures *past* guild abundance against another county-level farming metric: area in farms, as calculated by the 2002 Agricultural Census. The more farming that was going on in an area, the less project participants generally talked about the working landscape as a thing of the past.

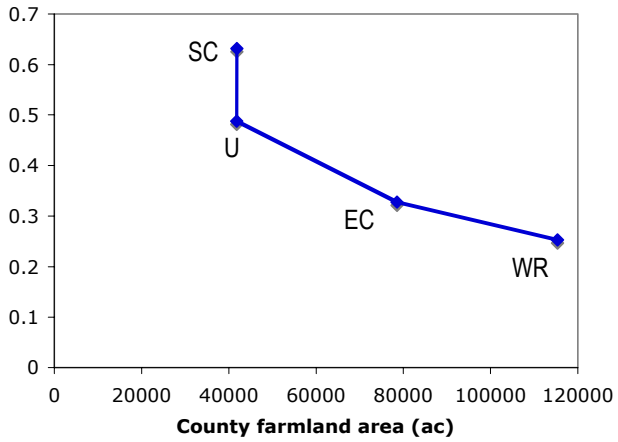


Figure 3.40. Relationship between county farmland acreage and abundance of the *past* narrative guild across POL community projects. Farmland data source: 2002 Census of Agriculture, USDA.

This relationship does not explain, however, why Stanley Creek residents invoked *past* narratives more often than Uwharries residents, given the comparable farmland acreage in their respective counties. This discrepancy suggests that overall rurality may exert some effect on this narrative guild, too: the Uwharries is still more of an overall working landscape than Stanley Creek, so discussion of land use is not as confined to the *past*. Stanley Creek is a relict rural landscape in a (sub)urban matrix—the working landscape that community members there had known is now only a memory. In the Uwharries, on the other hand, the working landscape is both a memory and a living reality: subsistence farming is gone, but property still generates income through timber harvest. Therefore, Uwharries discourse data reflects the strong presence of both *past* and *present* perspectives.

From the foregoing analyses of beta diversity across the discursive and biophysical landscapes, some summary observations can be made about the beta diversity of POL narrative types. To begin with, the four community projects were demonstrated to be more similar than different in terms of narrative composition. Put another way, there was more difference among the narrative types used *within* a given community than there was *among* the communities. That said, compositional differences were evident among the community projects, and they did not correspond to the geophysical distances among the project sites; instead, judging from Western Rowan's outlier status, differences appeared to reflect the land use orientations of the project participants. This interpretation was reinforced by the finding that different perspectives on land use varied in abundance across land use gradients in the biophysical landscape.

3.6. Gamma diversity in POL discourse

Finally, I will consider the diversity of the POL discourse as a whole: its gamma (γ) diversity. To do this, I have sorted the discourse segments from the project through *cluster analysis*, a technique "used to group entities into homogeneous subgroups on the basis of their similarities" (Lorr 1983: 1). Each cluster contains segments that are the most like each other in terms of thematic and function narrative types employed, as well as the spatial *scale* they reference.[26] This process provides a basis for characterizing different kinds of discourse that were found in the data.

The cluster analysis was undertaken using SAS 9.1.3, a statistical software package. The input data was a list of all the discourse segments, each of which was coded for the presence/absence of each narrative type. When every thematic narrative was treated as a separate variable, variation among discourse segments proved too great to enable meaningful clustering. To remedy this, I grouped the thematic narratives into categories (based on the sub-categories listed in Table 3.4) and assigned each discourse segment a score for each category, signifying the presence/absence of any of the constituent narrative types. A dissimilarity matrix was then generated from these data using Jaccard's dissimilarity coefficient (see Section 3.5.1). This matrix reflected the dissimilarity, i.e. "distance," between each pair of discourse segments, based on the proportion of attributes they shared. Since only the presence of narrative types—and not their absence—was deemed meaningful, the presence/absence scores were treated as

[26] In addition to studying how discourse varies across different scales, it is also possible to examine the different scales that are addressed through discourse. To do this, I coded each discourse segment according to the spatial scale referenced by the speaker. I have grouped these scales into three categories: 1) *individual* (pertaining to a site or property), 2) *community* (pertaining to an area that encompasses all or part of a community/study site), and 3) *macro* (pertaining to an area larger than a community, such as a region or state). This measure provides another way of distinguishing among different ways of talking about place.

asymmetric binary variables, meaning that absence-absence (0-0) correlations were excluded from the analysis.

Next, cluster analysis was performed on the dissimilarity matrix, using Ward's minimum variance method (Ward 1963). Ward's is a commonly-used agglomerative, hierarchical clustering algorithm, in which the goal at each successive stage is "to form a group such that the sum of squared within-group deviations about the group mean of each profile variable is minimized for all profile variables at the same time" (Lorr 1983: 90). In other words, since the most accurate grouping of the data would put every discourse segment in its own group, Ward's method tries to create clusters that sacrifice the least accuracy, and it tracks the loss of accuracy at each step as the data is aggregated. This statistical metadata can be used to identify optimal numbers of clusters: groupings that are as accurate as possible, but not so numerous as to render interpretation infeasible. In this case, I have selected a sixteen-cluster solution, because it is the smallest optimal cluster combination that still explains more than half of the variation in the data (R^2 = 0.527).

So, the POL discourse data have been divided into sixteen groups, each of which represents a particular kind of discourse whose profile differs from all the other kinds. The locations of these clusters in discursive space can best be represented through a *dendrogram* (Figure 3.41). This "tree diagram" shows how the sixteen clusters were joined together. As in a family tree, the clusters that are closer to each other on the tree are more closely related. The *x*-axis tracks the diminishing R^2 value as clusters are lumped together. If this axis were extended until R^2 equaled 1, the tree would continue to divide until it had 340 branches, one for each coded discourse segment.

The clusters are colored to indicate which community project accounts for the greatest number of discourse segments in that cluster. While this color-coding offers some insight into the content of that cluster, it should not be accorded too much significance; more striking is the fact that every cluster includes discourse segments from multiple communities, and most include all four. This is understandable, since, as beta diversity analysis indicated, the POL discourse data is characterized by greater diversity within communities than among communities.

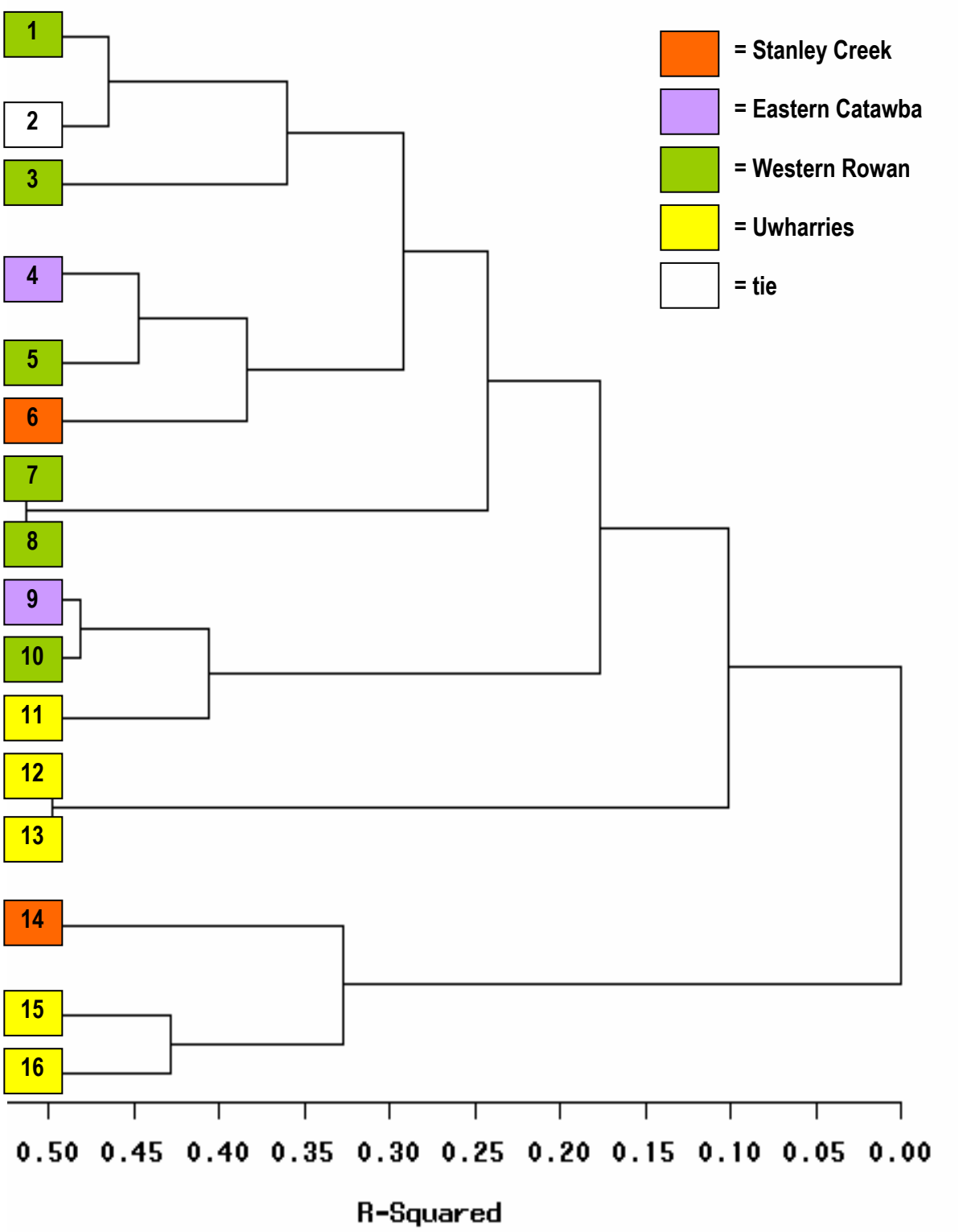


Figure 3.41. Cluster analysis of POL discourse data: dendrogram for 16 clusters. Colors indicate which community's discourse segments occur most frequently in that cluster.

Two interesting patterns do emerge from looking at community prevalence across the clusters, though. One is the disproportionately large number of clusters in which Western Rowan discourse segments occur most frequently. This indicates that discourse in the Western Rowan community project was more consistent than in the other communities: certain kinds of discursive acts were repeated frequently there, while others rarely or never took place. Discourse in other communities was more variegated and therefore more broadly dispersed among all the clusters. The other interesting pattern is the division of the dendrogram between Western Rowan and the second-most dominant community project, the Uwharries. In this case, discourse segments from each of these communities tended to have more in common with each other than with discourse from the other community.

In order to characterize the gamma diversity of POL discourse, I will now profile the kind of discourse represented by each of the sixteen clusters. I will characterize the clusters in terms of communities represented, typical rhetorical context (interview or meeting), predominant narrative types, and scaling. I will also provide an exemplar discourse segment from each cluster.

Cluster 1

Proportion of total segments:	0.1029
Summary description:	Expresses appreciation for the traits that make a place valuable.
Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Uwharries
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting

Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation Orientation—affinity
Thematic narrative attributes:	Non-consumptive instrumental
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"See that land right there? That land is the most beautiful land in the world." (Darryl Blackwelder, Western Rowan)

Cluster 2

Proportion of total segments:	0.0382
Summary description:	Explains how the virtues of a place have been experienced by the speaker, or can be experienced by the listener.
Most-represented community:	Stanley Creek, Uwharries (tie)
Other communities represented:	Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Orientation—affinity
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"[My neighbor] has created trails just out behind my house where I can go out walking when I want to, and then there are so many different types of plant life and they are sort of highlighted in the different areas. And it's wonderful." (Beth Douglas, Stanley Creek)

Cluster 3

Proportion of total segments:	0.0412
Summary description:	Explains why the speaker enjoys outdoor activities in a given place.
Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Uwharries

Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Orientation—affinity
Thematic narrative attributes:	Experiential (present-oriented)
Scale:	Individual
Exemplar:	"Well, as far as what we're doing here, I just like the freedom. It's not, we don't have the freedom to do exactly what we wanna do every day. I mean, we've got stuff here we've got to get done. But we kinda can decide for ourselves what we need to do and when we need to do it, and that kind of thing." (Tim Sloop, Western Rowan; talking about the appeal of farming)

Cluster 4

Proportion of total segments:	0.0735
Summary description:	Testifies to the social value of place.
Most-represented community:	Eastern Catawba
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Western Rowan, Uwharries
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation Orientation—heritage Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Interactional
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"It's the backbone of the community, the land is. If we don't preserve some of the green, future generations won't have any to look at." (William Waller, Western Rowan)

Cluster 5

Proportion of total segments:	0.0353
Summary description:	Calls community members to action, urging them to collectively defend valued attributes of place.

Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Control (collective-oriented)
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"This is the time to speak up and tell everybody what you want see happen, what you don't want see happen." (Adele Goodman, Western Rowan)

Cluster 6

Proportion of total segments:	0.0294
Summary description:	Affirms a Christian ethic of environmental stewardship.
Most-represented community:	Stanley Creek
Other communities represented:	Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan, Uwharries
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation
Thematic narrative attributes:	Creedal
Exemplar:	"We are good stewards of the land—I think it's Christian. That's just as important as being a steward of your money or being a steward of any other relationship, your relationship of the land. You are a steward. It belongs to God and you are supposed to leave it a little bit better than [you found it]." (Mary Forrester, Stanley Creek)

Cluster 7

Proportion of total segments:	0.0441
Summary description:	Draws upon speaker's personal experiences to endorse collective tools for natural resource management.
Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Uwharries
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Coda--collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (solution-oriented)
Exemplar:	From the standpoint of what I do, which is land use and zoning, there's been a lot of strong support in many areas out there—much. I mean there was support out there in the western part of the county when nobody else would support. The farmers in western Rowan County were some of the agents that first spoke of wanting zoning in the county to try to protect those open areas. They recognized that it could be a true agent to help preserve the rural lifestyle. (Marion Lytle, Western Rowan; at the time of the interview, Lytle was Rowan County Planning Director)

Cluster 8

Proportion of total segments:	0.0382
Summary description:	Appeals to reason in support of collective tools for natural resource management.
Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Uwharries
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—rationalization Coda--collective

Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (solution-oriented)
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"Farmland doesn't put the burden on the tax structure that development does." (Sally Murphy, Western Rowan)

Cluster 9

Proportion of total segments:	0.0324
Summary description:	Locates community in regional, national, or international context, usually from an immigrant perspective.
Most-represented community:	Eastern Catawba
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Western Rowan, Uwharries
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—rationalization Orientation—affinity
Scale:	Macro
Exemplar:	"I think that our people like to move here, in this part of the country, is because this part of the country is like, looks similar to our country. Also, the climate is very good. It's rainy all year long, and then it's mountainous. This part of the country has rivers for people to go playing and fishing or hunting. There are more jobs for our people. That's why our people move to this part of the country. More and more keep coming." (Shawn Cheng Chang, Eastern Catawba)

Cluster 10

Proportion of total segments:	0.0647
Summary description:	Describes, in matter-of-fact language, how land is allocated to different productive uses.
Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Uwharries

Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—rationalization Orientation—affinity
Thematic narrative attributes:	Consumptive instrumental Geographical
Scale:	Individual
Exemplar:	"320 acres of tomatoes and 25 acres of strawberries under black plastic. And 50 acres of pumpkins. And we've got 10 acres of cantaloupe. And we have 10 acres of sweet corn. And I've got my tree nursery. And poinsettias. And the petting zoo." (Randall Patterson, Western Rowan)

Cluster 11

Proportion of total segments:	0.0735
Summary description:	Explains how land has been or can be used productively in the community.
Most-represented community:	Uwharries
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation--rationalization
Thematic narrative attributes:	Consumptive instrumental Geographical
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"That is my hope, that logging could fit with the economy or the kind of recreation based economy, but the logging would be a little different. Maybe you use some more low-impact, sustainable forestry, and that you would get some extra money to supplement what you're not getting by turning over pines every thirty years, from other, from other places." (Ruth Ann Grissom, Uwharries)

Cluster 12

Proportion of total segments:	0.0765
Summary description:	Decries land use changes that have taken place in the area.
Most-represented community:	Uwharries
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation Complication—change Result—loss
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (problem-oriented) Geographical
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"At one time, back in the Forties, it was all farmland—cotton fields and such. There wasn't, wasn't no trees here. And then, you know, for the last, you know, six or seven years, you know, farmland is gone, you know, and your pine trees are starting to grow and, but now it's getting re-cut again. And then that's what the problem is, too: everybody is cutting their trees. We're cutting the hardwood, the oaks, we're replanting back in pines." (Scott Morrow, Uwharries)

Cluster 13

Proportion of total segments:	0.1176
Summary description:	Recounts how the area has declined over time.
Most-represented community:	Uwharries
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Complication—change

	Result—loss
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"See, we was farming at that time—people, we had neighbors, we had actually good neighbors, they came and, they went to Rock Springs [Camp Meeting], and we came to Balls Creek [Camp Meeting]. When they went to Rock Springs, we would look after their cows, we'd milk their cows and take care of everything they had to do every day, and when we came to Ball's Creek, they looked after our cows. So, this was back then, you had neighbors that would work with each other. I mean, you were just good neighbors, it was a neighborhood. It wasn't like these days. Nowadays most people don't even know who their next-door neighbor is. Back then, you knew everybody, and to me it was peaceful back then." (Paul Beatty, Sr., Eastern Catawba)

Cluster 14

Proportion of total segments:	0.0794
Summary description:	Characterizes community in terms of shared ancestry, history, and cultural identity.
Most-represented community:	Stanley Creek
Other communities represented:	Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan, Uwharries
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Orientation—heritage
Thematic narrative attributes:	Identity
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"East of Newton…. That's where all the Republicans were, that's where the English people within the larger county were clustered there. Before Catawba County was formed and was part of Lincoln County, the English were the majority and the Germans were the minority. But then when Lincoln County was sort of cut in half, east of Newton down toward Sherrills Ford, there was a pocket of English-speaking people who suddenly went from being part of a majority—political, economic,

	governing majority—they suddenly were in the new county where they were a minority and I think that helped create some cohesiveness." (Robert Eades, Eastern Catawba)

Cluster 15

Proportion of total segments:	0.0794
Summary description:	Recounts how the speaker and her family have used their land over time and how they used to be largely self-sufficient.
Most-represented community:	Uwharries
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Orientation—heritage
Thematic narrative attributes:	Consumptive instrumental
Scale:	Individual
Exemplar:	"We raised hogs, chickens. We didn't have to buy anything but coffee, sugar, and stuff like that. We lived off the farm." (Ida Hoover, Stanley Creek)

Cluster 16

Proportion of total segments:	0.0735
Summary description:	Recalls how the community used and shared resources in the past.
Most-represented community:	Uwharries
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Orientation—heritage

Thematic narrative attributes:	Consumptive instrumental
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"People in the community don't have to depend on each other as much as they did in the past. They depended on each other to, again as I mentioned, the wheat thrashing, the corn shucking, and killing hogs. Whatever, barn buildings or whatever they was there then. It's a different community now; it was strictly basically farming and saw milling. And now I don't think there's a full-fledged farm in the community or a sawmill in the community." (Dolon Corbett, Uwharries)

Examining these clusters provides a richer picture of the discursive diversity captured by POL: each cluster can be seen to represent not only as addressing a particular aspect of place, but as expressing connection to place in a discursively distinct way. Remembering a self-sufficient family farm, comparing the local landscape to one's homeland in Laos, and urging fellow community members to help combat suburban sprawl are all ways of talking about place, but they differ functionally, structurally, and thematically. The recurrence of these diverse discursive practices across multiple community projects suggests that residents of the region largely draw upon a shared interpretive repertoire when talking about local landscapes—a repertoire with which conservation agents would do well to become familiar.

3.7. Conclusion

Perspectives on Land, a project whose origins lay in my own connection to the North Carolina Piedmont, led to the initiation of four distinctive community conversations. Each conversation was a unique reflection of the place in which it occurred, the individuals who participated, the community partners who shaped the

fieldwork, and the relationships that I established with all of these. In each conversation, certain narratives emerged as particularly salient expressions of the connection between people and the land. Proportional abundances of functional and thematic narrative types differed among community projects.

At the same time, the project exhibited a remarkable degree of compositional overlap: most narrative types and discursive articulations were found to be shared among multiple communities. This finding undermines the null hypothesis of discursive self-similarity: the narrative diversity of the POL region could not be extrapolated accurately based on the diversity of any one community. Narrative richness at the regional scale was found to be lower than a richness-area ratio derived from a given community project would predict. The cluster analysis of aggregate project data suggest why this is so: at a regional scale, discursive patterns emerge that are shared among multiple communities.

In the end, an understanding of both local and regional discursive patterns is necessary for a full understanding of the ecological narratives from POL. Thematically, the narratives must be studied in community context: the persuasiveness of particular thematic narrative types in each community project depended on the landscape and demographic history of that locality, as well as the kinds of changes or threats that local residents were confronting. Furthermore, community narratives reference locally-specific touchstones: allusion to "the Rhyne property," for example, provided crucial grounding for narratives in Stanley Creek, but would be meaningless elsewhere.

Functionally, however, regional comparison better enables us to see how ecological narratives are being employed. Distinctive narrative guilds were used to locate a landscape's use values in the present or the past. Common discursive practices

can be distinguished: similar ways in which residents of different communities ascribed value to the landscape, staked their personal claims to it, and defended their visions for its future. Most narrative types can be seen as part of an interpretive repertoire that is drawn upon by members of multiple communities, albeit to differing degrees. Some of the differences in narrative type abundances across communities can be associated with differences in dimensions of the biophysical landscape, thus lending support to my initial hypothesis that discursive variation reflects ecological interaction between local discourses and local environments.

Analysis of discourse from the POL project leaves some questions unanswered, however. One question is: How do we know whether the regional discursive patterns identified through this project are particular to this region or are generic responses to landscape change that could be found in any community? This question will be addressed in Chapter Four, which describes the results of a similar project conducted in a different region of North Carolina. Another question is: How do we know whether the views expressed in the community projects are representative of widely-held perspectives in the communities and the region? In other words, are the narratives that were co-created by project participants persuasive to anyone other than the participants themselves? This question will be taken up in Chapter Five, in which the community projects are evaluated.

Chapter 4

LITTLE TENNESSEE PERSPECTIVES: CO-CREATING COMMUNITY NARRATIVES IN THE NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAINS[27]

4.1. Introduction

> *It's very, very complicated and there's pros and cons on both sides. How we can ever arrive at anything we can live with is going to be tough. And yet, down deep inside, we all know that we need to.*
>
> Bill Fouts

> *Listen to the people who aren't talking. The majority of people don't like to come to public meetings. They don't like public speaking. They're not comfortable, and they're not going to get embroiled in a controversy.*
>
> Wilma Anderson

Between them, Bill Fouts and Wilma Anderson identify the discursive challenge facing their home, Macon County. Residents of Macon, located in the Southern Appalachian mountains of far western North Carolina, face a challenge similar to that confronted by their Piedmont counterparts: they must decide how to address landscape change that is taking place on an unprecedented scale. As discussed in Section 1.2 and elaborated in Section 4.2, change in this case is driven by the rapid influx of second-

[27] Portions of this chapter also appear in a forthcoming book chapter by Gabriel Cumming, Stacy Guffey, and Carla Norwood, entitled "Opportunities and challenges in community capacity-building: lessons from participatory research in Macon County, NC." The chapter is included in *Participatory research for community-based natural resource management: Lessons from North America*, ed. Carl Wilmsen, William Elmendorf, Larry Fisher, Jacquelyn Ross, Brinda Sarathy, and Gail Wells. I am very grateful to Stacy Guffey and Carla Norwood for their contributions to the chapter.

home builders, retirees, and vacationers, all of whom are attracted by the scenic beauty of the area—a phenomenon known as *amenity migration* (McGranahan 1999). Growth and development are primary topics of concern and comment among Maconians. Informal conversations, however, have not translated into effective civic dialogue about how growth should be managed. As Fouts and Anderson suggest, county residents may care about the local landscape and hold views as to how it should be stewarded, but most are loath to express these views in a public context. Debate at public hearings in Macon County has been dominated by a small number of empowered speakers, whose belligerent grandstanding intimidates most other attendees into silence. Because of this rhetorical climate, combined with the passivity of elected leadership and the influence of development interests, all county-level attempts at collective land use management—i.e. planning ordinances—have been abandoned or reduced to meaninglessness (see Section 4.3).

The *Little Tennessee Perspectives* project (LTP), which was conducted in Macon County during 2004 and 2005, was designed to help overcome this impasse by fostering more empowering civic dialogue about land use issues—dialogue that was grounded in community members' shared values. Like POL, LTP relied on co-created community narratives as a vehicle for the articulation of values and management strategies. The same methodological approach was used to do this: community members were interviewed, a documentary was produced from these interviews, the documentary was presented at public meetings, and the screening was followed by a small-group discussion process. LTP represented an opportunity to refine and further codify this *iterative participatory research model* (IPRM), informed by the POL research experience.

Despite its core similarity to POL, however, LTP differed in a number of respects. Firstly, LTP addressed landscape change not only through documentary ethnography, but through geospatial analyses (see Section 2.8). Secondly, as has already been suggested, LTP was more focused on public resource management mechanisms (land use planning by local governments) than on private ones (conservation by non-profit organizations). In rural North Carolina, planning is a much more controversial topic than private conservation, so the project team had to be more careful about navigating political waters, representing both sides of debates, and mediating potential conflicts. This planning orientation also led to the selection of a project area that corresponded to a governmental jurisdiction: a county, as opposed to a more organic conception of *community*. The study population could therefore include any voting citizen who could potentially influence policy in Macon County. So, LTP was comprised of one large project site, rather than several smaller sites scattered across a region. The project's county-wide scaling enabled the project team to make more use of county-wide publicity vehicles such as newspapers; consequently, LTP achieved a higher profile in local public discourse than the POL community projects had.

LTP can be seen, then, as both following from and parallel to POL. One the one hand, LTP represents a further refinement of the iterative participatory research model (IPRM) initially developed in POL. On the other hand, the differences between the projects provide opportunities for comparison.

This chapter follows the same overall structure as the preceding POL chapter. After introducing the site, I will trace the evolution and implementation of LTP, culminating in the series of public meetings that were held in August 2005. Then I will

review the data that emerged from this public process and assess the project's alpha narrative diversity. Finally, I will compare the discourse data from LTP and POL to examine inter-regional beta and gamma diversity.

4.2. Macon County

The landscape of Macon County is largely congruent with the upper Little Tennessee River basin, which drains most of the county's land area and provides fertile bottomland (LTWA 2003; see Figure 4.1). This 30-mile-long stretch of valley, where the county seat, Franklin, is located, is flanked on both sides by mountains. To the southeast rises the Highlands Plateau, home to the resort town of Highlands. To the northwest is the isolated community of Nantahala. Many of the high ridges in the county are protected National Forest Service lands. In fact, 48% of Macon County is owned by the federal government (NC DFR).

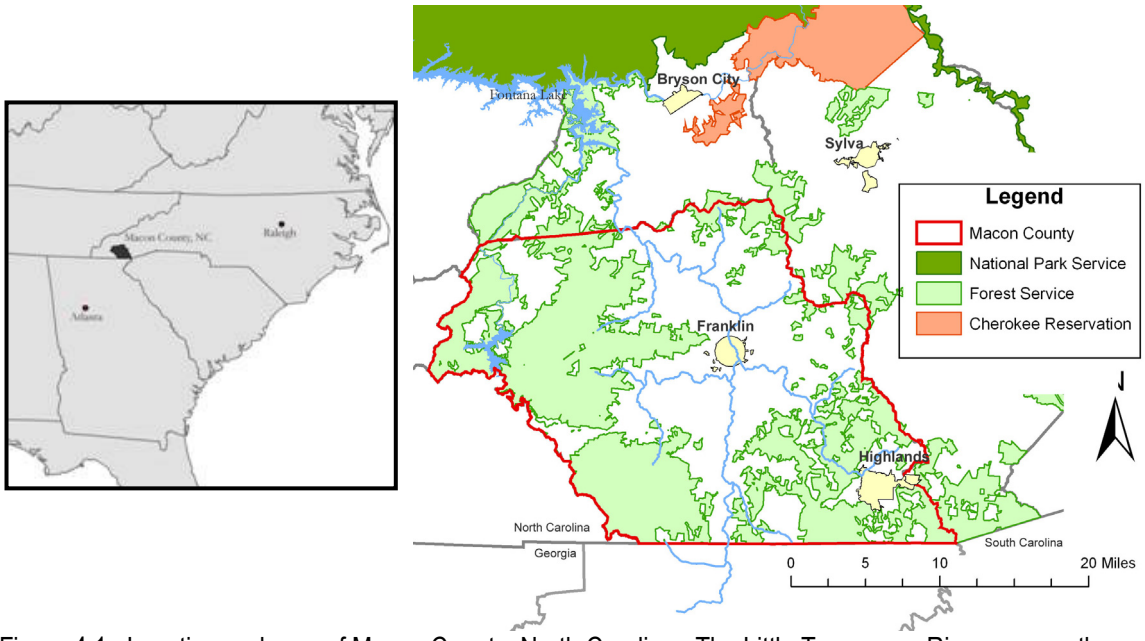


Figure 4.1. Location and map of Macon County, North Carolina. The Little Tennessee River runs northward through the middle of the county. Maps created by Carla Norwood.

A natural corridor for wildlife and human migration, the north-south oriented Little Tennessee valley bears evidence of human activity dating back some 10,000 years, when nomadic hunters set up temporary camps in their pursuit of game. With the acquisition of agricultural skills, tribes began constructing permanent settlements. Around 1000 AD, the Mississippian people began construction of the mounds that can still be found in the valley today. Around 1550, the Cherokee became the dominant presence in the area and remained so until white settlers arrived in the late 1700s. With the cession of Cherokee lands in an 1819 treaty, the white settlement of the area began in earnest (Frizzell 1987).

4.3. A story of *Little Tennessee Perspectives*

4.3.1. Background

Like *Perspectives on Land*, the chain of events that led to the conception of *Little Tennessee Perspectives* can be traced back to the Scotch-Irish settlement of the region. In this case, however, these settlers were not my own ancestors, but those of local residents like Stacy Guffey (Figure 4.2), one of my community partners. The story below is based on his narrative reconstruction of Macon County's historical ecology.

Figure 4.2. Stacy J. Guffey.

Upon their arrival, many of the early European settlers in the southern Appalachians intermarried with Cherokee, creating a culture unique to the region (Blethen and Wood 1998). Geographically isolated and politically marginalized, mountain communities survived through self-reliance and mutual aid. During this period, settlement generally occurred at the foot of the forested hillsides. The floodplain, being fertile and relatively flat, was used for farmland and pasture. The hillsides and mountains were reserved for timbering and hunting. Homes were built close to water sources, on

easily accessible land located near pastures, fields, and roads. This pattern reflected the necessities of the times.

Between the early 1900s and the mid-1960s, Macon County grew slowly. There was a steady outflow of young men and women who left the area to seek jobs at plants in Atlanta and Charlotte, or in the booming Detroit auto industry. In the 1960s, as access to the area improved and Americans generated more disposable income, the area was "discovered". This process of "discovery" has continued unabated, and today Macon County is one of the fastest growing counties in the region.

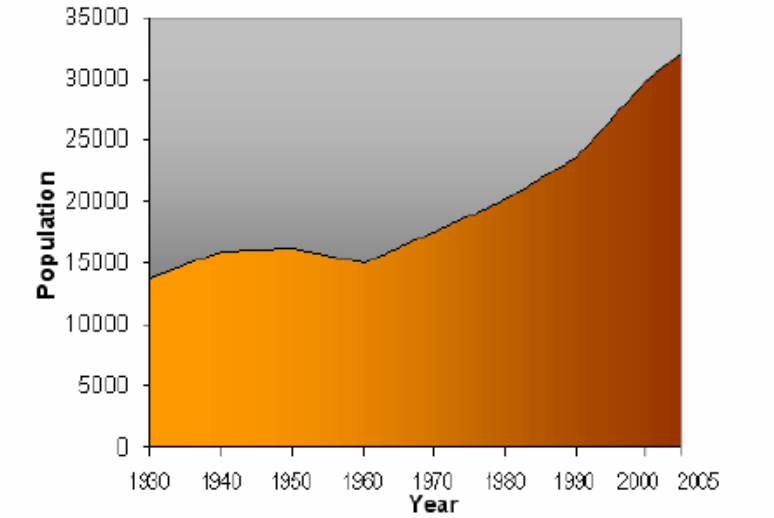


Figure 4.3. Population growth in Macon County, 1930-2005 (Source: US Census 2005). Graphic created by Carla Norwood.

The typical newcomers were from Florida—either native Floridians or in-migrants to Florida from the urban areas of the Northeast. Having originally fled from the densely-populated Northern urban areas, this latter group now sought refuge from the rapid growth and sometimes oppressive heat of south Florida. That refuge was a brief vacation to the cool mountains of western North Carolina.[28] Once there, they discovered

[28] Because of this migration history, Floridian in-migrants to Macon County are sometimes wryly called "half-backs" by locals: they came from the North, they moved to Florida, and now they are half way back.

that local land prices were a fraction of those where they came from, and many of those visitors built second homes that they used in the summer or for vacations.

For these new homebuyers, an amenity such as a mountain view or river frontage was more valuable than being close to an existing road or to farm land. With money made in the lucrative south Florida real estate market, they were able to build extensive roads to reach the woodlands and high mountains. As long-time landowners realized how desirable their mountainside property had become, many could not resist the temptation to subdivide and sell old family land. Local entrepreneurs began real estate and development enterprises.

Today's Macon County is no longer isolated. A newly completed four-lane highway has brought the Atlanta metro area within two hours' driving time. The northern fringes of the Atlanta suburbs creep further north each year. A new wave of in-migrants from the Atlanta area are purchasing land in Macon County in anticipation of retirement, when many plan to relocate to the area permanently.

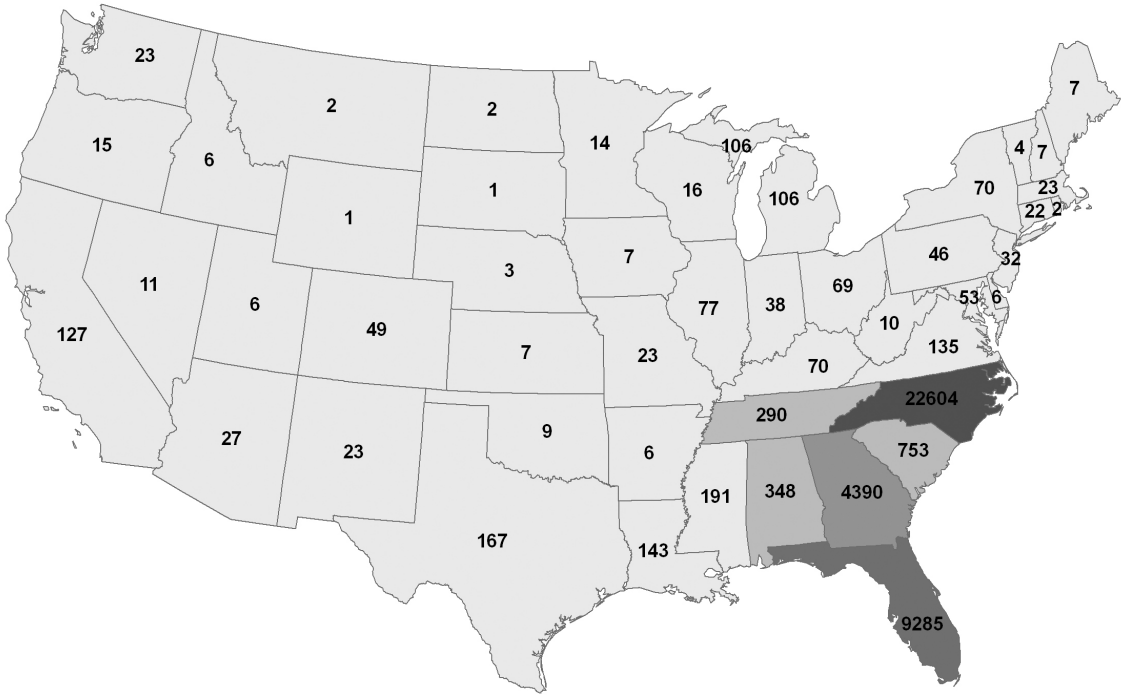


Figure 4.4. Number of property parcels in Macon County owned by people whose primary residence is in each state. Residents of every state (including Alaska and Hawaii) own property in the county. Darker shading denotes states that are home to greater numbers of Macon County property owners. Forty-three percent of the county's parcels are owned by out-of-state residents. Twenty-four percent of the parcels are owned by Floridians, while 10% are owned by people from Georgia. These percentages do not reflect the number of out-of-state in-migrants to Macon County who now list their primary address as North Carolina (Source: Macon County Tax Department 2005). Graphic created by Carla Norwood.

The unprotected ridge tops in Macon County, which just twenty to thirty years ago had little monetary value, are now being sold for prices as high as half a million dollars per acre. Mountainsides are being scored with subdivision roads and dotted with new homes. The former farms in the fertile floodplains have also become prime real estate and are rapidly filling with suburban-style homes. These new development patterns have created many new economic opportunities, but they have also created problems never before faced by Macon County. Rising land values have created an inflated housing market that is inaccessible to many local working families. Development on the wooded mountainsides has led to runoff, erosion, and habitat fragmentation. Steep slope development has raised public safety concerns over slope failures and landslides, while

floodplain development has increased the likelihood of property loss and casualties during a flood. These issues have led many community members to call for improved planning.

Figure 4.5. The landscape of the Brendletown area in Macon County illustrates the contrast between the old and new development patterns. The older houses are located in the valley (foreground), while newer houses have been built on the mountainside above (background).

Land use planning was not on the minds of those who lived in the sparsely-populated, "pre-discovery" Macon County; a deep-seated mistrust and resentment of government intervention made the topic taboo. Strong community bonds precluded formal regulation, because most disputes could be negotiated informally among neighbors. In the early 1970s, as the real estate boom began and outsiders started settling in the county, planning began to enter into public discussions of the county's future. Draft land use plans were floated as early as 1974, but serious formal efforts did not begin until the 1990s when corridor protection ordinances, a land use guidance ordinance, and a land use plan were introduced. In 2002, a comprehensive zoning ordinance was introduced. None of those proposed ordinances, including the zoning ordinance, ever received the

political or popular backing necessary to become realities. Except for a sign ordinance, only minimal state or federally mandated ordinances were adopted.

4.3.2. Genesis of Little Tennessee Perspectives

In all of the aforementioned planning efforts, there was a discrepancy between the values most frequently expressed by citizens and the final policy outcome. The contentious civic dialogue regarding planning and the failure to reach any agreement that would protect the area's environmental and cultural heritage was frustrating to community members who recognized the unprecedented threats that continuing unplanned development posed. A fresh approach to talking about these critically important issues was needed before the landscape attributes valued by both current residents and amenity migrants were lost.

To address this need, a group of concerned Macon residents founded a planning advocacy organization, Macon Tomorrow. Among these residents were Stacy Guffey, who would become the County Planning Director, and Carla Norwood (Figure 4.6), then Executive Director of the Little Tennessee Watershed Association. Norwood subsequently enrolled in the UNC Ecology Curriculum with the goal of refining techniques for establishing more effective public discussions of landscape change. There she became familiar with my POL research and suggested that we try applying some of the same techniques in Macon County

Figure 4.6. *Little Tennessee Perspectives* project team members (clockwise from top left): Susan Ervin, Dennis Desmond, Carla Norwood, Ben Brown.

Through conversations with Norwood's Macon colleagues, we developed the idea for *Little Tennessee Perspectives*. Norwood and I would work under the guidance of a community advisory committee that included representatives of concerned local resource management agencies and organizations: the Macon County Planning Department (Guffey), Macon County Planning Board (Susan Ervin), the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (Dennis Desmond), Macon Tomorrow (Ben Brown), and the Western North Carolina Alliance (Roger Turner). Norwood's ability to bridge the roles of "community member" and "researcher" facilitated the development of a research agenda that was driven by community concerns.

Through LTP, the project team aimed to foster an inclusive, informed and ongoing conversation about the changing landscape in Macon County—a conversation

rooted in community members' shared values. The three components of that goal are worth emphasizing separately. An *inclusive* conversation was considered important because previous planning debates had been so contentious that many residents did not feel comfortable, or even safe, expressing their opinions. We wanted to create a forum where everyone felt that their perspectives were valued. An *informed* conversation was deemed important, too, because in the past, the public conversation about planning had been hampered by misinformation about policies (sometimes due to deliberate obfuscation) and a general lack of accurate, relevant, and accessible information about the rates and long-term consequences of population growth. Finally, we wanted to foster an *ongoing* conversation that could encourage the community to consider issues related to development before crises arose, rather than simply reacting to changes after the fact. We hoped the project would serve as a catalyst for a more robust civic dialogue around land-use issues, thus helping build community members' capacity to take a more active role in shaping the future of their shared landscapes.

4.3.3. Participatory research process

Starting in fall 2004, we conducted 50 semi-structured interviews with full-time residents of Macon County, who were identified through purposive/snowball sampling (see Section 2.5.1). Interviews were conducted by the researchers and by six trained volunteers from Macon County: Bill Crawford, Susan Ervin, Charlie McLaughlin, Mary McLaughlin, Deborah Thomas, and Mary Yonce (Figure 4.7). Aside from Ervin, these individuals were not on the advisory committee: they were involved specifically as interviewers. As in POL, the interviews were audio-recorded, and interviewees were photographed in places that held special significance for them. Emergent narratives from

the interview data guided the development of a documentary (entitled *Macon County Voices*) and a presentation of geospatial data on land-use change, both of which were honed through feedback from five focus groups and from community partners.

Figure 4.7. LTP community interviewers: Bill Crawford, Mary and Charlie McLaughlin, Deborah Thomas, Mary Yonce.

Public presentation of the data began with a press event that unveiled the documentary and landscape change presentation to media representatives, who could then disseminate information about upcoming meetings. Four public community meetings were advertised through newspapers, radio, flyers, newsletters, and a postcard sent to a number of civic organizations' mailing lists. The meetings were held on weekday evenings over the course of two weeks in August 2005, and they were held in four different parts of the county. These measures were taken to maximize the number of residents who would be able to attend.

Drawing upon lessons learned from POL, a rigorous structure was imposed on the LTP meetings, as described in Section 2.8. Opening presentations led immediately into small-group discussions, in which each group came up with "visions" for Macon County's future. These visions were then shared with entire assembly.

The first meeting, held in Franklin, was also the largest—70 participants—and most energetic. The response to the research was overwhelmingly positive. The second meeting was held in Cowee, a rural valley in the relatively undeveloped northern end of

the county. Only 40 people attended, but the overall tone of discussion was similar to the Franklin meeting.

The meetings in Highlands and Nantahala were different, reflecting their isolation from the rest of the county. The Highlands Plateau and the Nantahala Range represent such daunting physical obstacles that it takes thirty and forty-five minutes, respectively, to reach the two outlying settlements from Franklin. As a consequence, Highlands and Nantahala residents tend to feel alienated from the political discourse of the county as a whole. Indeed, it would probably be most accurate to say that they are not part of the same discursive community as the residents of the Little Tennessee valley. They feel—with some justification—that county leaders in Franklin disregard their concerns, and conversely that they are not well represented by the views of Maconians at large. Discussions of land use issues in Highlands and Nantahala inevitably focus on the immediate vicinity of those communities, even if discussants are asked to consider the county as a whole. In other respects, however, Highlands and Nantahala differ strikingly from one another.

The town of Highlands is very affluent and has its own well-established planning ordinances. Highlanders, most of whom are outsiders, tend to regard other Maconians as ignorant yokels and to be astounded at their failure to grasp the importance of land use planning. At the same time, many Highlanders themselves display remarkable ignorance with regard to the geography and populace of the county as a whole. The tone of the Highlands meeting reflected these tendencies: discussion among the forty attendees largely favored planning restrictions but tended to focus on the immediate Highlands area.

Nantahala is an insular community of multi-generational families that has only recently begun to experience the effects of amenity migration on a large scale. The economic and cultural rift between outsiders and locals is most pronounced here, and tensions are running high: residents are struggling to reconcile a cherished lack of land use restrictions with an antipathy towards newcomers and their exclusive subdivisions. The Nantahala meeting, which drew only twenty participants, was the only one in which a participant tried to sabotage the participatory process: one property-rights advocate repeatedly interrupted other speakers to dismiss the research and deride opposing viewpoints. This individual attempted to pit locals against outsiders, claiming that all of the former oppose land use regulation while all of the latter favor it—an argument that is refuted by the project's findings (see Section 4.4). He was unable to attract support from other attendees, however, so his ability to derail the meeting was limited.

All told, small-group discussion participants at the four LTP community meetings came up with 127 visions, which we subsequently grouped and ranked by topic. In this way, we could see how many small groups independently identified the same issues. The most common topics, given below, represent 51% of the visions (a complete, ranked list of the vision topics is included in Appendix C). They illustrate that protecting the character of Macon County is very important to the citizens who attended the meeting. Ninety-five percent of all the visions, in fact, favored some sort of collective action to address changes in the county.

Top Ten Visions (the number following each vision indicates how many small groups independently listed it)

1) Increased and improved planning (13)
2) Protecting water quality/watershed and storm water management (9)
3) Expanding restrictions on building on ridge tops (7)

4) Encouraging incentives for voluntary conservation by land owners and developers (7)
5) Clustering development in appropriate areas (6)
6) Regulating development on steep slopes (6)
7) Encouraging economic development that delivers quality jobs (5)
8) Harmonizing growth with community character (5)
9) Protecting/improving appearance of main commercial corridors (5)
10) Assuring and expanding affordable housing opportunities (5)

4.3.4. Initial evaluation of the process

Feedback from meeting participants suggested that the public process conducted by the LTP team had been largely successful in creating a more inclusive, effective discursive space for talking about land use issues. We asked the 170 participants at the public meetings to complete written evaluations, and eighty-two forms were returned. This response rate (48%) largely reflects the fact that many couples only turned in one evaluation form. From a demographic perspective, the evaluations suggest that our meetings were reasonably successful in attracting a representative group of Macon residents (see Table 4.1).

Unlike any of the POL meetings, outsiders outnumbered locals among LTP meeting evaluation respondents. This may partly reflect a disproportionate tendency of outsiders to attend public meetings (see Section 3.3.2) and/or fill out written evaluations; however, it is certainly also reflective of the demographics in a county with such rapid in-migration. Indeed, it is at least as notable that 45 percent of respondents were locals, given Maconians' frequent assertion that "locals won't come to a meeting." Improved inclusiveness was also suggested by the 22 percent of respondents who indicated that they rarely attend public meetings (less than once a year).

Age	
Range	19-86
Average	59.7
Gender (%)	
Female	40
Male	60
Local/outsider (%)*	
Local	44.92
Outsider	55.07
↳*Years living in Macon County (range)*	1-50

Table 4.1. Demographic traits of evaluation form respondents, LTP community meetings (n=82). Ethnicity was not measured, but minority representation at the meetings was negligible. *Consistent with cultural conventions in rural North Carolina, "local" only refers to individuals who grew up in the community. Those who moved into a community do not count, even after many decades; neither do people from nearby communities outside the project area. If respondents indicated that they were not born in Macon County, they were asked to report how many years they had lived there.

Box 4.1. Key results from written evaluations of *Little Tennessee Perspectives* public meetings

Among respondents (*n*=82):

- **98.5%** agreed or strongly agreed that the meeting process was an effective way of helping people talk about the changing landscape
- **89%** thought that the documentary was representative of viewpoints in Macon County
- **100%** agreed or strongly agreed that the small group discussions allowed everyone a chance to participate
- **91.5%** reported learning something valuable about the changing landscape
- **98%** indicated that they were *more supportive* of having a public conversation about land-use planning in Macon County after participating in this process than they were beforehand

Evaluation responses (see key results summarized in Box 4.1) suggest that the LTP public process was effective—it encouraged participation, introduced relevant information, and engendered meaningful dialogue about land use issues. The documentary presented viewpoints with which people both strongly agreed and strongly disagreed—an indication that it had effectively captured a diversity of viewpoints.

Suggested areas for improvement included shortening the overall program and having information available about steps other communities have taken to deal with similar issues.[29] Reactions to the meetings did not vary significantly based on which meeting a respondent attended, local/outsider status, gender, or frequency of attending public meetings.

Particularly noteworthy is respondents' indication that simply participating in LTP's public meeting process increased their support for an ongoing community dialogue around land-use issues. Though this self-assessment is more subjective than a before-and-after attitudinal comparison, it nonetheless represents a vindication of IPRM: it suggests that a public meeting that references community narratives and provides non-threatening participation opportunities can itself build community capacity to address landscape change. In other words, if the public process associated with an issue can be seen as rewarding—even enjoyable—instead of tedious and brutal, community members may feel more willing or able to take on that issue collectively.

The enthusiasm that participants felt about the LTP public process, along with the strongly pro-planning sentiments expressed both in the small group discussions and evaluation forms, are unprecedented in the history of Macon County public meetings. The high attendance (170 community meeting participants, 250 total presentation attendees) was also unusual: the only land use meetings that usually attract large numbers of Maconians have been reactive (in which attendees protest a proposal at the last minute,

[29] We had deliberately refrained from presenting very much information during the meetings about how other communities were addressing growth, because we wanted to give Maconians the opportunity to come up with their own ideas first. However, these repeated requests for more information about other communities' strategies led the project team to design the *Getting from Ideas to Action* forum six months later (see Section 5.2.6).

just before or after it is considered for approval), rather than proactive (part of an ongoing, rather than crisis-driven, civic dialogue).

4.3.5. Sharing the results

Findings from LTP were shared with project participants, the general public, and county leaders. A written project report was mailed to all project participants, including interviewees and meeting attendees. The report was also summarized in a press release, which received front-page coverage in the *Franklin Press*, Macon County's primary newspaper (15 Nov. 2005). This article was the culmination of the extensive local media coverage that LTP received: the project was the focus of at least seventeen newspaper articles and editorials in at least seven newspapers in 2005, as well at least two stories on local radio.

The project team presented LTP findings to county leaders—in particular, the elected County Commissioners and the Planning Board (which is appointed by the Commissioners). All commissioners and planning board members were personally invited to attend the LTP public meetings; however, no commissioners and only a couple of planning board members attended (two commissioners did attend another LTP presentation). To give participants another way of reaching county leaders, we distributed postcards at each meeting and invited people to write suggestions for the commissioners on them. We then presented these postcards, along with the list of visions generated in the meetings, directly to the commissioners at a subsequent public hearing on August 29. The commissioners did not respond to any of these comments.

Community partner Ben Brown, Norwood, and I gave an additional presentation at a meeting of the Planning Board, whose Chair had endorsed the project from the

outset. At this meeting, two Planning Board members who were aligned with developers and property-rights interests appeared to feel threatened by LTP's conclusions. These board members, despite having previously participated in the project, turned against it. Planning board member Lamar Sprinkle, for example, reacted to the landscape change presentation by saying, "if you show stuff like that to people, you're gonna to scare 'em to death" (*Franklin Press* [Franklin], 19 August 2005).

Subsequent developments since the completion of the LTP public process are described in Chapter Five.

4.4. Discourse data: the public document from LTP

My analyses of LTP discourse, like the POL analyses, will be based on the *public document* of community members speech from the project, which includes the *Macon County Voices* documentary and records from the public meetings. However, instead of using recorded meeting footage, the meeting data I use here includes the visions generated by each small group, as well as any other written notes taken by the small group recorders. The advantage of this written record is that it better captures the input of all meeting participants (recorded footage, by contrast, only captures some speech). Given the large number of participants and simultaneous small-group discussions in the LTP meetings, I deem this the most representative document. The disadvantage of the written record is that utterances cannot be attributed to individual speakers, so the demographic traits of speakers in the documentary and the meetings cannot be directly compared. Meeting participant demographics from the written evaluations (Table 4.1),

however, can serve as a basis for comparison with the demographics of speakers in the documentary (Table 4.2).

Age*	
Range (decade)	10-90
*Average***	52.5
Gender (%)	
Female	40.22
Male	60.87
Ethnicity (%)	
African American	1.09
Latina/o	2.17
White	96.74
Local/outsider (%)**	
Local	63.04
Outsider	38.04

Table 4.2. Demographic traits of speakers in LTP documentary (n=92 discourse segments). Percentages may not sum to 100, because some discourse segments include overlapping speech from multiple individuals. * Age is estimated by decade, because exact ages are sometimes unknown. ** Average age based on decadal age estimates. *** Consistent with cultural conventions in rural North Carolina, "local" only refers to individuals who grew up in the community. Those who moved into a community do not count, even after many decades; neither do people from nearby communities outside the project area.

4.5. Alpha narrative diversity in LTP discourse

The distribution of functional narrative types in LTP discourse reveals a project that was more action-oriented than POL: speakers spent less time legitimizing and orienting themselves and more time determining how to address the consequences of change. The overall proportion of the discourse represented by orientation was lower, and the proportion represented by coda markedly higher, than in any POL community project. This difference, already evident in the documentary, becomes more pronounced when the meetings are included. Most of the meeting data are simply codas: vision

statements that are based in preceding narratives but look toward next steps. Since the visions produced by the small groups are decontextualized, their specific narrative antecedents are not usually discernable.

Function	***Perspective***	***Documentary (%)***	***Meeting (%)***	***Overall (%)***
Legitimation	1. evaluation	43.48	0	19.7
	2. rationalization	17.39	0	7.88
	3. mythopoesis	40.22	0	18.23
Orientation	H. heritage	30.43	2.7	10.82
	A. affinity	31.52	0	10.82
Complication	y. change	45.65	0	20
	n. continuity	0	0	0
Result	L. loss	28.26	0	13.77
	G. gain	14.13	0	4.92
	I. inevitability	3.26	0	1.31
Coda	#. collective	44.57	91.89	61.31
	*. individual	11.96	9.91	10.49

Table 4.3. Representation of functional narrative types in discourse data from LTP. Figures indicate the percentage of discourse segments that feature a given functional element. Overall percentages are derived from the combined documentary and meeting data.

LTP speakers favored *evaluation* slightly over *mythopoesis* as a legitimation strategy, while relying equally on *heritage* and *affinity* to provide orientation. They tended to associate *change* with *loss* and to favor *collective* action—a tendency that increased in the public meetings. At the same time, a substantial number of speakers preferred *individual* responses to change—considerably more than in POL. This reflects the controversy surrounding land use planning in Macon County, rooted in fundamental disagreement about the appropriate relationship between the public interest and individual rights. In LTP, more clearly than in POL, we can see how both collective and individual recommendations can be arrived at from either a *heritage* or an *affinity* perspective (see Table 4.4).

	# *(collective)*	* *(individual)*
H (heritage)	"As an old timer and one who has roots here, I guess people like me would like to see it stay the same. Obviously that's not going to happen. There's going to be change, and what we want to do is plan so that that change will make it at least be as good and maybe better than what we have now. But we have a, we've got to do some land planning or something to curtail the growth or regulate the growth so that we still maintain our good, clean environment and good way of life that we all enjoy." (Bill Fouts)	"This is a tract of land that was settled by my ancestors, and I guess, I think I'm seventh generation… and it's still all in one tract with the family. And hopefully it stays that way…. I've kind of got this thing about if people's got property and pay their taxes then I feel like basically they should do what they want to with it. As long as they do it… responsibly." (Mitchell Owenby)
A (affinity)	"The principal product of the forest, I think most foresters would agree at this point, is clean water—and it is vitally important to us. I would like to see the flood plain kept free of houses as possible and I would like to see the tops of the ridges and the forested slopes kept this way, because I think we need it for a clean air, we need it for clean water, and we need it for the rural uses of land that's going to keep us a rural economy and a rural landscape." (Dick Heywood)	"One of the biggest things I like about it is the freedom from the tight restrictions that I grew up with in the major cities.... There is no law against everything that you do around here.... We feel like one of the nice parts about the area is that it is our responsibility to maintain our part of it and it's not an induced responsibility. It's ours that we feel from within. We take a lot of pride in that." (Larry Nandrea)

Table 4.4. Exemplar statements illustrating the different combinations of orientation type and coda type that are found in LTP discourse.

The speakers in the top row of Table 4.4—Bill Fouts and Mitchell Owenby—both ground their observations in *heritage*, citing their family's protracted connection to the land. The speakers in the bottom row—Dick Heywood and Larry Nandrea—orient themselves in terms of *affinity*, describing a valued attribute of place. Not surprisingly, Fouts and Owenby are locals, while Heywood and Nandrea are outsiders. Fouts and Heywood, however, both favor collective management solutions, while Owenby and

Nandrea prefer individual freedom. Their four statements, therefore, represent four distinct narrative strings: *H#*, *H**, *A#*, and *A**. The existence of all four combinations in LTP discourse disproves the polarizing assertions of Steve Cochran (Section 4.3.3) and others who have maintained that outsiders always favor land use planning while locals always oppose it. Each of these strings merits further examination.

Figure 4.8. Bill Fouts digging in his garden. Photo by Ralph Preston.

H#: Bills Fouts lives in a beautiful mountain cove in Cowee valley (Figure 4.8). Members of the Fouts family, one of the most long-established and highly-regarded families in Macon County, have lived there for generations. In this statement, Bill Fouts expresses his wish that this rural heritage, in which widely-spaced landowners were free to tend their land as they saw fit, could continue. However, he recognizes that population growth is now permanently changing the landscape. This being the case, he reluctantly decides that collective management—"land planning or something"—offers the best hope for maintaining valued aspects of the community's heritage: not only the "good, clean environment," but also the "way of life."

Figure 4.9. *a.* Mitchell Owenby. *b.* Owenby property, Nantahala.

*H**: As his statement attests, Mitchell Owenby (Figure 4.9a) also stewards land that has been in his family for many generations: in this case, a gorgeous cove in Nantahala (Figure 4.9b) that adjoins the Appalachian Trail. Like Fouts, he would like the landscape to remain largely unchanged. However, he believes that the responsibility for maintaining that landscape lies with individual property owners, not the government. A visit to his family's property makes it easy to see why: the Owenby family is still in a position to largely control the destiny of their own landscape. Historically, many mountain families occupied an entire cove by themselves, but in present-day Macon County this is increasingly rare. Their property, consisting of pastures and a scattering of small structures, is nestled in the crux of the cove; the Forest Service owns the surrounding ridges. It is a place so remote that, aside from the occasional jet trail across the sky, no sign of outside civilization can be heard or seen—a place where Owenby can stand in the yard of his family's cabin and fire a rifle without fear of disturbing anyone else. The use of the land has changed little for at least a century, and the crystal-clear

branch that flows out of the cove is doubtless far more pristine than the sediment-laden creeks draining more developed watersheds.

If an individual family's resource management decisions have been so sustainable, why hand that authority over to a local government whose resource management record is much more dubious? From Owenby's perspective, the problem is that the outsiders moving into Macon County do not know how to properly use land in the mountains: their vacation mansions, identical to those in suburban Atlanta, are inappropriate for steep mountain slopes. Owenby does not feel that a regulatory burden should be placed on responsible landowners such as him because of other landowners' poor decisions.

Figure 4.10. Gill and Dick Heywood. Photo by Charlie/Mary McLaughlin.

A#: Dick Heywood (Figure 4.10) moved to Macon County because of its healthy environment and rural character, as his statement suggests. From his perspective, the landscape's resources benefit everyone: they provide vital water, air, and livelihood. It follows that the community should protect sensitive parts of that landscape, such as

floodplains and forested slopes. The Heywoods have done their part to help achieve this goal by placing a conservation easement on their wooded property.

Like the Heywoods, many outsiders have come to the area from places where land use was already subject to much more regulation. They do not see planning as an infringement of personal freedoms, but as the only opportunity for the community to protect what they value. From this perspective, it is hard to understand why locals who deplore the degradation of the mountain landscape would resist taking measures to stop that degradation.

*A**: For Larry Nandrea (Figure 4.11), on the other hand, Macon County's lack of regulations is one of its primary attractions. Nandrea associates land use planning with sprawling urban areas where he has lived, such as Denver, Colorado. He cherishes the freedom afforded to landowners in Macon County's relatively rural landscape. Like Owenby, he believes that individuals should take responsibility for stewarding their land—and, like Owenby, he is himself an exemplary land steward. He and his wife, Ann, operate her family's inherited farm in the Prentiss/Clarks Chapel community, and they have participated in multiple voluntary agricultural conservation programs.

Figure 4.11. Ann and Larry Nandrea on their farm.

If all Macon County property owners managed their land like Fouts, Owenby, Heywood, and Nandrea, the landscape's integrity and beauty would be ensured. Where the four speakers diverge, however, is the question of what to do about less scrupulous landowners: those who develop their land irresponsibly, causing ecological and aesthetic degradation. Does the government have the responsibility or the right to constrain their behavior for the sake of the common good? For many urbanite outsiders, the answer is clearly yes: they see government as the necessary and appropriate arbiter of individual interactions. From the rural perspective of long-time Maconians, however, this notion may be unpleasant, if not downright unjust—government regulation, like marriage counseling, suggests a breakdown of respect and trust among the parties involved. Land use planning requires an admission that Macon County is not the close-knit community it once was, where neighbors respected each other and most conflicts could be resolved around the kitchen table—that it is instead a population of dissociated individuals, in

which neighbors are strangers and potential adversaries. The fate of the county's landscape will depend on how these four narrative strings are negotiated.

Documentary			*Meeting*			*Overall*		
Rank	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***	***Rank***	***Theme***	***%***
1.	Policy	29.35	1.	Policy	33.33	1.	Policy	31.53
2.	Spatial	20.65	2.	Spatial	22.52	2.	Spatial	21.67
3.	Negative	18.48	3.	Economic	18.02	3.	Development	18.23
3.	Development	18.48	3.	Development	18.02	4.	Economic	16.75
4.	Aesthetic	17.39	4.	Aesthetic	15.32	5.	Aesthetic	16.26
5.	Economic	15.22	4.	Environmental	15.32	6.	Land use	12.32
5.	Amenity	15.22	5.	Land use	14.41	7.	Environmental	10.84
6.	Demographic	13.04	6.	Social	9.91	8.	Social	10.34
7.	Nat. resource	11.96	7.	Cultural	7.21	9.	Negative	9.36
8.	Social	10.87	7.	Hazard	7.21	10.	Nat. resource	8.87
9.	Land use	9.78	8.	Nat resource	6.31	11.	Cultural	7.88
10.	Genealogical	8.70	9.	Justice	5.41	12.	Amenity	6.90
10.	Cultural	8.70	9.	Conservation	5.41	12.	Demographic	6.90
11.	Life course	7.61	10.	Property	3.60	12.	Hazard	6.90
11.	Emotive	7.61	11.	Recreational	2.70	13.	Conservation	6.40
11.	Conservation	7.61	11.	Tourism	2.70	14.	Property	4.93
12.	Property	6.52	11.	Infrastructure	2.70	15.	Genealogical	4.43
12.	Hazard	6.52	12.	Historical	1.80	16.	Life course	3.45
13.	Environmental	5.43	12.	Negative	1.80	16.	Emotive	3.45
14.	Recreational	4.35	12.	Demographic	1.80	16.	Justice	3.45
14.	Outdoor exp.	4.35	13.	Genealogical	0.90	16.	Recreational	3.45
14.	Independence	4.35	13.	Independence	0.90	17.	Historical	2.46
15.	Historical	3.26	13.	Ecological	0.90	17.	Independence	2.46
15.	Ecological	3.26				18.	Outdoor exp.	1.97
16.	Religious	2.17				18.	Tourism	1.97
16.	Unique	2.17				18.	Ecological	1.97
16.	Spiritual	2.17				18.	Infrastructure	1.97
16.	Laissez-faire	2.17				19.	Religious	0.99
17.	Justice	1.09				19.	Unique	0.99
17.	Biodiversity	1.09				19.	Spiritual	0.99
17.	Farm. lifestyle	1.09				19.	Laissez-faire	0.99
17.	Sensory	1.09				20.	Biodiversity	0.49
17.	Knowledge	1.09				20.	Farm. lifestyle	0.49
17.	Tourism	1.09				20.	Sensory	0.49
17.	Risk	1.09				20.	Knowledge	0.49
17.	Moral	1.09				20.	Risk	0.49
17.	Infrastructure	1.09				20.	Moral	0.49
17.	Access	1.09				20.	Access	0.49

Table 4.5. Ranking of thematic narrative types found in LTP discourse data. Thirty-eight narrative types occurred in the documentary and the overall project. Themes are ranked according to the percentage of discourse segments in which they occur. Overall percentages are derived from combined documentary and meeting data.

The thematic narrative types found in the LTP documentary were reinforced in the public meetings; no new types were added. In both cases, *policy* or *spatial* narratives are represented in half of the discourse. The former is a reflection of the project's policy orientation; the latter indicates the importance of spatial relationships in that policy discussion, which will be examined further below. Other prominent narratives suggest ways that one might expect people to discuss place as an amenity migration destination: in terms of *development*, *economics*, and *aesthetics*. The prototypical LTP narrative string is 1HAyL#/*policy* (see Table 4.3 for definitions of functional type symbols).

While the fact that LTP discourse emphasized *policy* more than POL is largely an artifact of differences in research design, I see the frequent use of *spatial* narrative as potentially representing a distinctive feature of Mountain (versus Piedmont) discourse. The mountainous topography of Macon County intrudes much more into the lives and conversations of local residents than does the gently rolling Piedmont landscape. Consequently, Maconians were relatively likely to speak in spatial terms. Examining the range of ways in which LTP speakers referenced the spatiality of place can illuminate many of the salient issues in the project's discourse.

In the most basic sense, LTP participants associated topography with identity: people felt aligned with the mountains, as is evident in the words of Mike Breedlove and Barbara McRae (Excerpts 4.1 and 4.2):

Excerpt 4.1

> These old mountains will get in your blood, now. There ain't a doubt in my mind. I know that- I know that for a fact. These old dark blue, smoky mountains—I'd never live anywhere else, and I want some kids to have that same feeling.

Excerpt 4.2

> The mountains are just, almost something spiritual to people. People just love the mountains. To see them from a distance or to be in them is something that, if you are a mountain person, you just feel that in the mountains. Like it's your home. It's hard to beat, really. It's hard to find a place that has more to offer if you are drawn to nature and mountain life.

Both excerpts describe the feeling of being what McRae calls a "mountain person"—from a *heritage* perspective and an *affinity* perspective, respectively.[30]

More specifically, people's sense of community has historically been defined in terms of valleys and coves, pockets of settlement that were separated from each other by intervening mountain ridges. Valleys are generally defined by the stream that drains them, whether a creek like Cowee or the Little Tennessee River itself. The north-south corridor represented by the river valley has been central to the history of Macon County, as Claire Suminski describes below.

Excerpt 4.3

> Through the centuries, this place has been chosen by people to live. It was one of the very central Indian locations before the European white man came here. And if you look at it, you can see why. It's surrounded by mountains. Lot of wildlife, gems, water, resources in the mountains, and then the valleys have rich soil for farming, rivers for transportation. We also have a corridor leading south where you don't have to go over any mountains—it just leads straight into the south. So you can see how people would have chosen this, and it's still that way today.

This unimpeded southward corridor has taken on negative connotations in recent decades, however, because it provides highway access for waves of incoming amenity migrants from Florida and Atlanta. As Deborah Thomas wryly observes (Excerpt 4.4), each new arrival would like to block the passage behind them—a phenomenon known as "last settler syndrome" (Nielsen et al. 1977).

[30] Interestingly, a trace of "mountain person" identity was also evident in the Uwharrie "Mountains" project site. When asked what she valued about living in the Uwharries, for example, interviewee Jewell Saunders replied: "I like mountains better than I do flat land."

Excerpt 4.4

> There's this unfortunate four-lane that leads right to Atlanta. And people are coming up that four-lane every day escaping the city, just like we did. You know, I'm a part of that phenomenon—I'm here, so let's put up a barricade, you know, down in Otto[31] and not let anybody else come in. But that's not feasible.

In spatial descriptions of in-migration via the Little Tennessee corridor, horizontality is paramount; in discussing the settlers that have already arrived, however, verticality takes on greater importance. Much of the debate about development in Macon County concerns the elevation of that development. As described in Section 4.3.1, settlement in the county was traditionally clustered at the foot of the mountains. Since amenity migration has tied property values to aesthetics, however, development has both risen onto the forested slopes and descended into the floodplains. Like Dick Heywood (Table 4.4), many Maconians object to this change. Given the symbolic importance of mountains in this community, long-time residents like Claudette Dillard (Excerpt 4.4) are often pained and offended to see a familiar mountainside covered with houses.

Excerpt 4.5

> If we don't do something, every one of our mountains is going to be the same. I told my grandson, I said you better go ahead and take some pictures of these mountains right now while there's not a house on every one of them.

High-elevation development rankles all the more due to the showy opulence and large size of the new houses, many of which are second homes that are only occupied for a few weeks or months each year. Topographic elevation has become an analog for social status; many community members have begun to feel like serfs in their own landscape, since their small ranch houses or trailers are now overlooked by mountaintop mansions. Bob Scott's populist tirade in Excerpt 4.6 gives vent to these feelings.

[31] A community in southern Macon County.

Excerpt 4.6

> Why should the view of the mountains for all of us be ruined by some rich cat that builds some obnoxiously huge house right on top of a ridgeline? Why should the rest of us have our view ruined so this one single fat cat can look out on the riffraff?

In these passages and others like them, a different kind of common pool resource can be discerned: the *viewshed*, which can be conceived as *the total area visible from a given point* (Fisher 1996; see Box 4.2). Views are not generally considered as a resource, but amenity-driven development has illustrated their economic value: buyers will pay huge premiums for home sites with magnificent views. This value is not secure, though, because viewsheds are an eminently *subtractable* resource (Dolšak and Ostrom 2003): their use by one person can diminish their value for others. "Isolation" is fetishized in the discourse of amenity-driven real estate; because of this, both sellers and buyers have constructed a pristine viewshed as the ultimate commodity. According to this logic, a mountainside home that looks out upon an uninhabited valley is tremendously desirable. This house itself, however, diminishes the market value of every other potential home site in the valley from which it can be seen. If another visible house is built across the valley, then the value of the first house is also diminished, and this value reduction continues as more houses are built. This aesthetic "tragedy of the commons" represents the paradox of an amenity-driven economy, as Lamar Sprinkle observes (Excerpt 4.7).

Excerpt 4.7

> The biggest thing that we have going in Macon County as far as the economy is what's done with real estate and development. We certainly don't want to stop that. But we don't want to ruin it either. We want to keep it in a way that people want to come here, and it's still a nice place for people to live.

Box 4.2. Geospatial analysis in the context of community discourse: the example of *viewshed*

The example of the *viewshed* concept illustrates how locally-relevant discursive interventions were made possible through LTP's combination of ethnography and geospatial analysis.

In response to the concerns that community members repeatedly expressed regarding the marring of views, Norwood created a "viewshed map" of Macon County. To do this, she computed the viewshed of points along each road in Macon County in ArcInfo using a 30 meter digital elevation model (DEM) of the county and the roads feature. By adding together the 'viewshed score' of each point along the road, she was able to calculate how visible each of the 30m grid cells in the county was from roads. When all the grid squares were color-coded according to their visibility "score," it was possible to identify the most highly-visible places in the county (see Figure 4.12).

When US Forest Service holdings were overlaid on this map (Figure 4.13), we realized that only a few of the most visible ridges were privately-owned. We identified one of these ridges that was slated for development (circled below in red), identified the parcel boundaries on that ridge (Figure 4.14), and modified a photograph to show what that hillside would probably look like when all the planned homes were built (Figure 4.15). This image generated a lot of interest and controversy in the community (see Section 4.3.4), which we saw as an indication that we had successfully "struck a nerve" in local discourse. The concept of *viewshed*, meanwhile, entered the community's interpretive repertoire: the term, with which most LTP participants indicated initial unfamiliarity, continued to be used in public conversations after the conclusion of the project.

The entry of *viewsheds* into Macon County discourse demonstrates that the ethnographic study of discourse can enable geospatial analyses to achieve heightened local saliency by resonating with existing community narrative themes. These analyses, then, can help build community capacity to address landscape changes by offering community members new conceptual tools for discussing those changes.

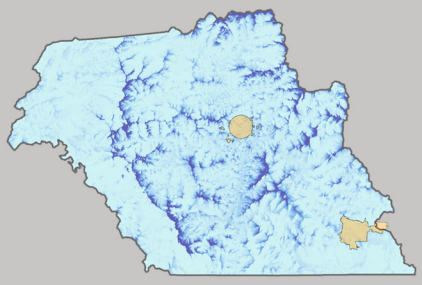


Figure 4.12

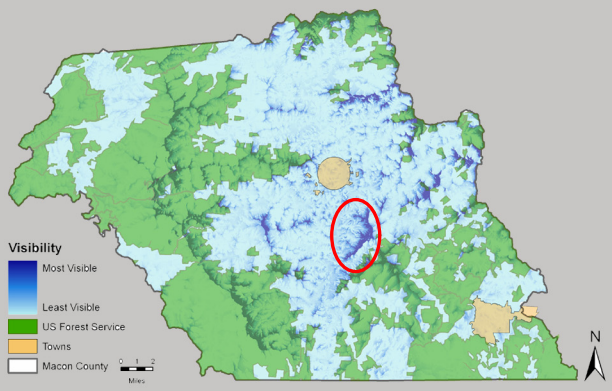


Figure 4.13

Figure 4.14

Figure 4.15

Mountainside development jeopardizes not only viewsheds, but also the community's "informal commons" (also encountered in the Uwharries; see section 3.4.4). Prior to the onset of amenity migration, most Maconians gave little thought to the aesthetic qualities of the mountain landscape. The part of their properties that was valuable was the arable farmland in the valley; the "old mountain land" that extended up toward the ridges yielded income only through the occasional timber harvest. Low values meant that there was little incentive to enforce property boundaries at higher elevations. The highlands, therefore, functioned as a commons—an arrangement that has been documented in other mountain communities as well (Netting 1976, Guillet 1981, Boyer 2006). Community members freely traversed the forested ridges on footpaths that provided shortcuts between valleys, or in pursuit of game. When the ridges began to be subdivided for residential development, however, this commons began to be enclosed. Mountain land was now expensive, and many of the new property owners did not understand or welcome the practice of walking or hunting across property lines. Mike Breedlove laments the resulting loss of access in Excerpt 4.8.

Excerpt 4.8

> I feel like we're giving up a lot in Macon County, folks are. We're just losing things that we used to- we didn't even think about it. I mean, I don't know anybody that rabbit hunts anymore. There's no place to go, no place to run your dogs. That used to be a big deal around here. You could go about anywhere you wanted to go, and at least if somebody seen you on their land hunting, they'd either holler to you to come have a cup of coffee when you get done or something—and now they got these damn yellow *No Trespassing* signs. I don't know—I think we lose a little bit every day.

Finally, during the course of LTP fieldwork another type of narrative entered into the spatial discussion of place: a narrative of *hazard* and hazard mitigation. On September 16, 2004, Hurricane Ivan brought torrential rain to Macon County, the most

devastating consequence of which was a landslide in the Peek's Creek watershed that resulted in four deaths (Figure 4.16a). Extensive flooding also occurred (Figure 4.16b). In the wake of this natural disaster, community members began to question the safety of building on slopes and in floodplains, as reflected in the comments of real estate agent Rich Bankston and Planning Director Stacy Guffey (Excerpts 4.9 and 4.10).

Figure 4.16. Effects of Hurricane Ivan (September 16-17, 2004) in Macon County. *a.* Piles of tree and house debris, swept downhill by Peek's Creek landslide. *b.* Flooding along the Little Tennessee River. Photos courtesy Macon County Planning Department.

Excerpt 4.9

> Local people lived by the streams. They're gone. The houses are gone. And it's put a note of caution in my thinking, that when somebody comes and says I want something on a stream, I think I'm going to suggest that they look real carefully at where it is. Visualize a hurricane dumping twelve inches of rain in twelve hours, and that stream gets up. Where is your house going to be? That may sound a little strange, a realtor talking himself out of a sale, but you really need to take that into consideration now. Always should have, but this is a- I don't think this was really a rare occasion. We have hurricane effect up here regularly.

Excerpt 4.10

> I think things like mountainside development and floodplain development and slide area development—this year we're going to talk about it in those terms. The whole community shares the risk with those things. And maybe at some point we can start quantifying economic risk, so we can go beyond that and talk about whether, you know, if we continue to build this way, here's your dollar value on what we're going to lose out on.

Despite all of the reservations that they expressed about mountainside and floodplain development, LTP participants rarely went so far as to assert directly that people who owned property in those areas should be prevented from developing it. Private property rights is a powerful enough ideology in Macon County that most speakers were uncomfortable talking about how planning could impact individual landowners. Exceptions included Allan Allman and Hank Shuler, who addressed the logical consequences of individual and collective management, respectively (Excerpts 4.11 and 4.12).

Excerpt 4.11

> If I had my vision, I don't know. Leave it alone. That'd be my vision. Let it become whatever it'll become. I don't want it the way I would want it… I would have to have control of it for it to be some kind of vision for me, okay? And I don't want control of it.

Excerpt 4.12

> How do we become more crowded and maintain what they all came here for to begin with? And that can happen by defining where we want that growth to be and how we want that growth to happen. It can happen. Of course, the other issue is the private rights issue and my right to do what I want. But my rights are restricted by society, and I'm willing to give up some of those rights.

Allman is so committed to private property rights that he does not even allow himself to envision Macon County's future; he believes that the future can and should be left entirely in the hands of individual landowners. Shuler, on the other hand, declares herself willing to give up personal liberties for the sake of the common good. Most Maconians do not display Allman and Shuler's logical consistency, however: they seem to wish that valued landscape attributes could be protected without infringing on individual rights. Speakers frequently complained about the development that was spreading across the landscape and expressed a strong desire to see the mountains, floodplains, or farmland

protected, while also maintaining that people should be able to do what they wanted on their own property. Like Sprinkle (Excerpt 4.7), they support the lucrative development/home-building industry, but they also want to safeguard the landscapes threatened by that industry. The cognitive dissonance of these positions is largely unrecognized or avoided.

4.5.1. Characterizing LTP's discursive landscape

To complement the foregoing discussion of salient narratives from LTP, I employed cluster analysis to examine the overall patterning of the project discourse. Using Ward's clustering method (see Section 3.6), I have divided the discourse segments from the project into twelve clusters, as depicted in Figure 4.17. This clustering explains the majority of the variation in the data ($R^2 = 0.543$). As the dendrogram illustrates, LTP data divides into two overall groups: discourse from the documentary and discourse from the public meetings. This split reflects the rhetorical differences between interview excerpts and written vision statements. The individual clusters are profiled below.

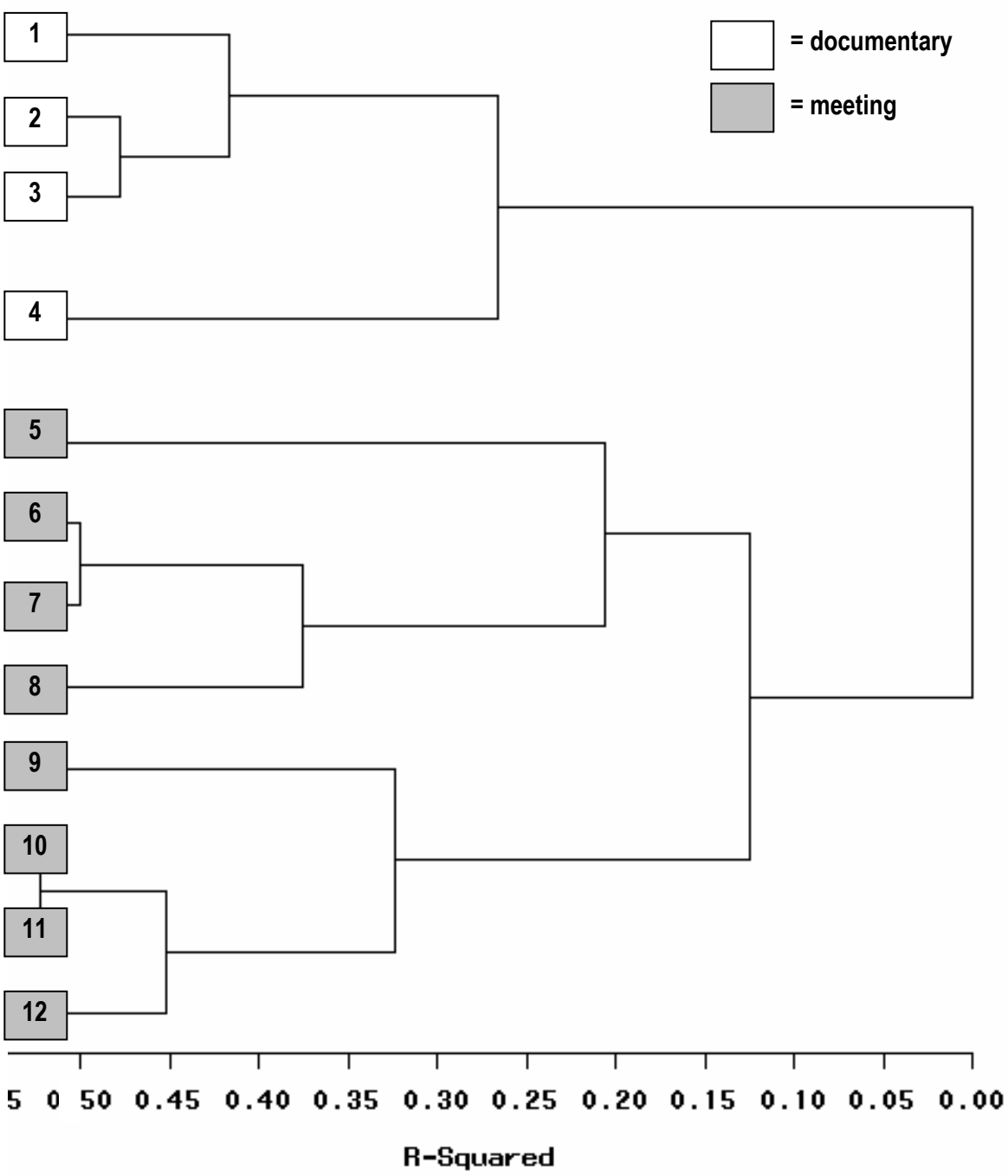


Figure 4.17. Cluster analysis of LTP discourse data: dendrogram for 12 clusters. Shading indicates whether the majority of discourse segments in a cluster were from the documentary or the public meetings.

Cluster 1

Proportion of total segments:	0.064
Summary description:	Expresses appreciation for the aspects of place that bring community members together.
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation
Thematic narrative attributes:	Identity Non-consumptive instrumental
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"I do think that fundamentally there is a lot of shared love for the land. It's just expressed in different ways and the concern is from a different perspective." (Deborah Thomas)

Cluster 2

Proportion of total segments:	0.1182
Summary description:	Describes the toll that growth and development is taking on the landscape and community.
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Complication—change Result—loss
Scale:	Geographical Management (problem-oriented)
Exemplar:	"Sometimes when I come [on] 64 from Hayesville at night, and I see the Big K and Lowe's and the big Ingles, and I'm thinking, God, is this Macon County? Is this where I grew up? You know, this commercial area I cannot believe, and we're getting more chain motels, hotels." (Wilma Anderson)

Cluster 3

Proportion of total segments:	0.0837
Summary description:	Sees both positive and negative changes taking place on the landscape; advocates collective efforts to realize positive outcomes.
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation Orientation—affinity Complication—change Result—loss, gain Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Geographical Management (solution-oriented)
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"I hope it will develop, but I hope it will be a good place to live and, you know, and they won't destroy the beauty of the place. Like building houses on top of these mountains—I can't stand that…. Have it so people can stay here and not have to leave to make a living." (J.L. West)

Cluster 4

Proportion of total segments:	0.0936
Summary description:	Recounts experiences of living on the land.
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Orientation—heritage
Exemplar:	"We farmed the land on Brendletown and we still do. It's like a community farm. Everybody in the family can just go and plant whatever they want to and it doesn't matter who actually owns it." (Stacy Guffey)

Cluster 5

Proportion of total segments:	0.1133
Summary description:	Advocates protection of place attributes that maintain quality of life.
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Non-consumptive instrumental
Exemplar:	"Protect our water at all costs."

Cluster 6

Proportion of total segments:	0.0591
Summary description:	Advocates resource-management strategies that protect the rights and decision-making freedom of individual property owners.
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—individual
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (solution-oriented) Consumptive instrumental Creedal
Scale:	Individual
Exemplar:	"But the point I'm trying to make is, they have title to use that property however they want, and it's none of my business. They are liable in a court of law for damage that they cause. But they're not liable for the value of my property going down." (Alan Allman)

Cluster 7

Proportion of total segments:	0.0296
Summary description:	Advocates management approaches that are respectful of the community's cultural heritage and diversity of opinion.
Context (primary,	Meeting

secondary):	
Thematic narrative attributes:	Identity
Exemplar:	"Harmonious compromise between growth and tradition."

Cluster 8

Proportion of total segments:	0.064
Summary description:	Emphasizes means of keeping the county's workforce from being unable to afford the rising cost of living.
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda--collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Consumptive instrumental
Exemplar:	"Macon County needs to develop infrastructure to attract industry that will bring jobs other than those in service industry. Keep young people here."

Cluster 9

Proportion of total segments:	0.1133
Summary description:	Makes comments or recommendations on how collective decision-making can take place in the community.
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (solution-oriented)
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"I think when people start to realize that one of the only ways that they're going to have a say about what happens in their community is to plan.... is perhaps when they will start to become involved in the process." (Dick Heywood)

Cluster 10

Proportion of total segments:	0.1034

Summary description:	Advocates particular land management measures.
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (solution-oriented) Geographical
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"A well-planned community that encompasses residential development, industrial development, open space and green areas, cluster development for the elderly, affordable housing options."

Cluster 11

Proportion of total segments:	0.1133
Summary description:	Encourages the differentiation of appropriate land uses for different parts of the landscape.
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Geographical
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"Preserve ridge tops (no more 'fat cats' on the mountain tops)" [references Bob Scott statement from documentary; see Excerpt 4.6]

Cluster 12

Proportion of total segments:	0.0443
Summary description:	Urges protection against threats to the health of community members and the environment.
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting
Functional narrative	Coda—collective

attributes:	
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (problem-oriented)
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"Better emergency services."

This cluster analysis reveals ways in which messages from LTP, like those from POL, can be differentiated according to their rhetorical characteristics. Cluster 6, for example, shows that property-rights advocates not only promote a particular policy perspective, but also tend to communicate in a particular way: their remarks tend to reference a small geographic area, and they tend to justify their positions through creed rather than personal experience.

Cluster 3 also warrants closer attention, because of the ambivalence toward change that it reflects: speakers in this category described the effects of change as both good and bad. This suggests a field in the community's discourse that is fluid and unresolved: community members seem unsure what to think about changes that are taking place. Consider the ambiguity in the use of the term *development*. When *development* is taken to mean the parcelization of the entire landscape for second homes and shopping centers, then Maconians often reference it purely as a problem: a phenomenon that needs to be contained, controlled. When J.L. West says that he hopes Macon County will "develop," however, he is referencing "economic development," which connotes progress and quality jobs. *Development* in this sense is widely regarded as positive. The problem, which Sprinkle grapples with in Excerpt 4.7, is that these two senses of *development* are intertwined in Macon County: economic growth is being driven by the fragmentation of the landscape.

This confusion, I would submit, is one of the main reasons why Maconians have had such a hard time collectively deciding how to manage their landscape: they have not figured out how to untangle the positive and negative connotations of *change* and *development*. Change is good if it improves community members' standard of living, bad if it degrades quality of life—and what if it does both? Community members may hate mountainside development, but they may also want the financial prospects of every landowner and homebuilder to improve. No systematic attempt has been made to reconcile these values.

Resource management agents have thus far been unable to help the community untie this discursive knot, because they have not untied it themselves. They have not consistently determined whether to appeal to community members' conservative or progressive impulses. The first approach would emphasize the negative effects of change and promote *conservation* (an inherently "conservative" concept, after all) as a remedy for this decline, a chance to protect some aspects of place before they all fall into decline. Land trusts have grasped, rightly, that fear of change is a powerful motivator for many rural North Carolinians, and they have used that fear to convince many individual landowners to protect their properties. Fear of change has also historically prompted the largest public meeting turnouts in Macon County, albeit sporadically. The problem with this tactic is that it only works as long as people still feel like they have something valuable to protect; when too much seems already lost, they may give up hope. Indeed, many project participants expressed this sense of hopelessness.

The other approach would emphasize the positive aspects of change by promoting the possibility of a more sustainable future. People fear change, but they also harbor a

conviction that their circumstances can continue to get better; promises of improved lives and livelihoods, therefore, also command considerable rhetorical power. This progressive approach can be used to advocate for systemic change, while the conservative approach is generally limited to saving the scraps of a previously broken system. However, rosy progressivism has the potential to alienate many rural community members if it seems disconnected from their heritage.

The difficulties that resource management agents face in choosing a stance on *change* are further compounded by the fact that many rural community members also regard new management regimes as change, even if those regimes are designed to ensure the continuity of valued local assets. This is a subtlety that, in my experience, resource management agents have had particular difficulty grasping. As a result, they are repeatedly frustrated when communities first lament the loss of an asset, then oppose a proposed measure to protect that asset. The point is this: a new way of managing an old resource is still new. As I discussed in Section 3.3.5, resource management agents who use the same language as developers sound like developers, even if they are seeking to oppose them: to many rural residents, their voices are the voices of change, not continuity. Again, land trusts have been more successful than other agents in this regard, because they have largely avoided the issue: they work with individual landowners under the existing policy regime, whatever that might be. The effective longevity of this approach is finite, however.

There is no simple answer as to how resource management agents should address *change* in a place like Macon County; community members' feelings on the subject are complex, as the LTP data attests. An awareness of this complexity would be a good

starting point, however: agents should become familiar with the diversity of discursive/narrative approaches through which area residents negotiate the subject.

4.6. Beta diversity across regions: comparing LTP and POL discourse

Comparing the discourse from LTP with that from POL enables the analysis of narrative beta diversity (β) across two North Carolina regions: the Mountains and the Piedmont. This analysis, plus the subsequent analysis of interregional gamma diversity (γ), will complete the testing of my initial research hypothesis that *local discourses are ecologically interrelated with other elements of local ecosystems and therefore differ among communities and regions*. Based on this hypothesis, I expected to find evidence of regionally-distinctive narrative devices through which participants in the two projects located themselves in their respective landscapes.

To measure beta diversity, I will first look at how POL and LTP relate in discursive space. I will approach this in two ways: by assessing the difference between LTP discourse and POL discourse as a whole, and then by measuring the dissimilarities among LTP and the four separate POL community projects. Finally, I will consider how the five community projects vary across biophysical space by locating them along landscape gradients.

4.6.1. Beta diversity across the discursive landscape of LTP and POL

If POL and LTP are compared simply in terms of thematic narrative richness, we can see that POL is the richer: fifty narrative types occurred in POL discourse, while thirty-eight occurred in LTP. One might expect this to be true, since POL encompasses a greater geographical area than LTP. What is perhaps more surprising is that LTP did not

include any thematic narrative types not also found in POL. I anticipated finding some narrative types that were unique to the Mountains, but I did not: from the standpoint of simple narrative richness (ignoring abundances), my hypothesis of interregional discursive difference was not supported. This is interesting, considering the apparent differences between the Mountain and Piedmont landscapes, as well as the differing management foci of the two projects.

If LTP contains no unique thematic narrative types, then the combined gamma diversity (γ) of the two projects is 50, the same as the diversity found in POL. Whittaker's beta diversity (β_W) across the two regions, then, is only 1.14—smaller than the beta diversity among POL community projects. Jaccard's dissimilarity coefficient ($1 - \beta_j$) between the two projects is 0.24—again, smaller than the dissimilarity between even the two most similar POL community projects. These measures indicate greater compositional proximity between the two study regions than among the sites in the POL study region.

The lack of unique thematic narrative types from LTP suggests, but cannot confirm, that thematic narrative diversity becomes saturated at the regional level. According to this argument, by sampling four sites in the Piedmont region, POL documented all possible narrative types that would be found in other regions as well. A researcher would only need to study one region, then, in order to capture the full universe of ways that people articulate their relationship to place. Maybe Stephen Kellert is right: the same attitudinal typology can be applied in Japan as in Montana (see Section 1.4).

Obviously, such a conclusion is premature. I cannot establish whether the narrative types found in a Piedmont region encompass those found in a Mountain region

unless I study an entire Mountain region—not just one county. Even then, I would not know how large an area shared the same gamma diversity—to find out, I would also have to study other regions at increasing distances across environmental and cultural gradients.

Moreover, the "thematic narrative richness" that I considered here is only a limited measure of discursive distance—and one that is dependent on my particular coding scheme. If my thematic narrative typology were broken down into smaller categories—or if another researcher divided the types differently—then some of those types might be unique to Macon County. All I can assert is that I applied the same "conservative" coding criterion to all the POL and LTP data, meaning that I added a new thematic narrative type only when the rhetorical characteristics of a discourse segment could not be fully explained using existing types. Following this criterion, I did not encounter any unique types in the LTP discourse.

Table 4.5 shows the compositional distances between the LTP discourse data and those from the four POL community projects:

Project Site	***Distance***
Stanley Creek	0.36
Eastern Catawba	0.40
Western Rowan	0.37
Uwharries	0.33

Table 4.6. Compositional distances between discourse data from Macon County (M) and the four POL project sites. *Distance* = the Jaccard dissimilarity coefficient between M and each POL project site, based on richness of thematic narrative types.

This table shows that, in terms of thematic narrative types, discourse from Macon County is most compositionally similar to discourse from the Uwharries. Macon exhibits more similarity to communities where a *past* perspective on natural resource use was prevalent—the Uwharries and Stanley Creek (see Section 3.5.2). These compositional

differences can be further elucidated by locating all five communities along environmental gradients (see below).

4.6.2. Beta diversity across the biophysical landscape of LTP and POL

When Macon County is located along the same urban-rural landscape gradient used to compare the four POL sites, parcel size and land use percentages tell two different stories (see Figure 4.18). As in the analysis of POL beta diversity (Section 3.5.2), I have constructed the gradient based on average parcel size. According to this measure, Macon County (average parcel size = 8.8 ac) falls in between the more "urban" (Stanley Creek and Eastern Catawba) and more "rural" (Western Rowan and the Uwharries) POL landscapes. Land use percentages for Macon suggest much greater rurality, however: the proportions of the county's landscape devoted to "rural" and urban land uses approach those of the Uwharries/Montgomery County. This discrepancy makes more sense when one considers that the bulk of Macon County's forestland lies within the Nantahala National Forest. When Forest Service tracts are excluded, the average parcel size drops to only 4.9 acres, reflecting the rapid fragmentation of the private land base. In other words, Macon County is less rural than its proportional land uses suggest.

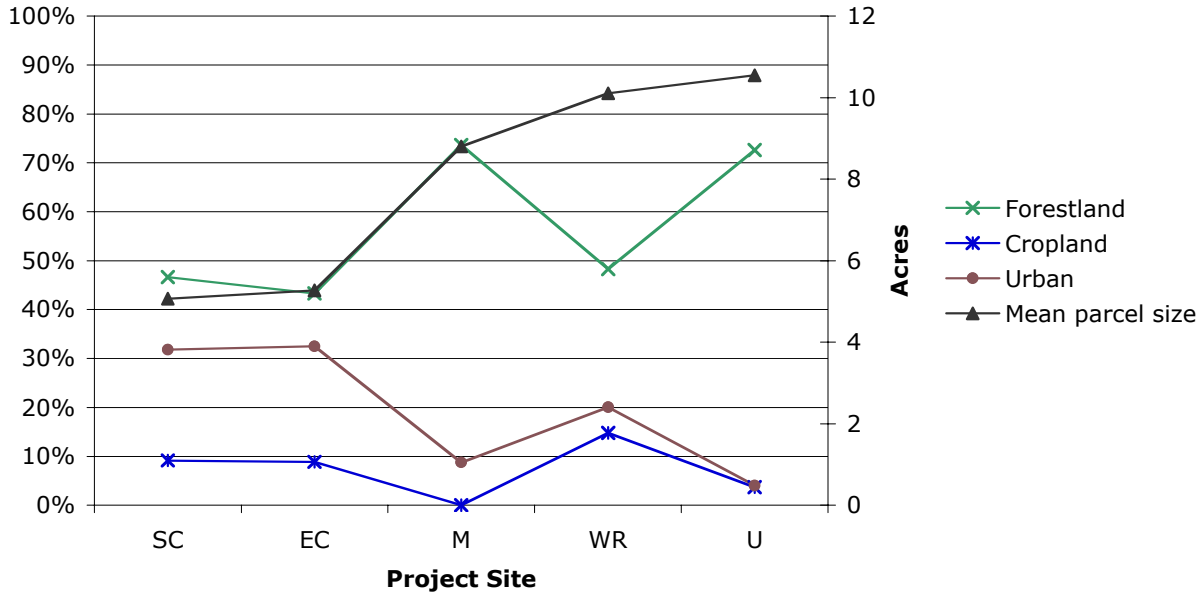


Figure 4.18. Mean parcel size of each project area and land use percentages of each corresponding county. Parcel data source: Macon County Tax Database. Parcel data includes parcels under all ownerships (private and public), but excludes incorporated municipalities. Land use percentage source: 1997 USDA Natural Resource Inventory. Land use percentages for the Uwharries are based on data from Montgomery County, since most of the project site falls in that county, and the project site landscape is generally more similar to the Montgomery landscape.

Figure 4.19 graphs the proportional abundances of the *past* and *present* narrative guilds[32] across this environmental gradient. As in Figure 3.38, the abundance of the *present* narrative guild increases with parcel size. The consistency of this relationship suggests that, in the Mountains and the Piedmont alike, communities with larger property parcels are more likely to value their landscape in terms of the material benefits that it can yield. The abundance of the *past* narrative guild, however, does not exhibit a consistent relationship with any of the landscape variables.

[32] The concept of narrative *guilds*, as introduced in Section 3.5.2, refers to groupings of narrative types based on their functional discursive role, rather than their taxonomic similarity. *Present* is a guild of narrative types characteristically employed when land use is discussed in the context of an active, working landscape. The *past* guild includes narrative types that are used in describing a remembered working landscape and how natural resources were used in former times.

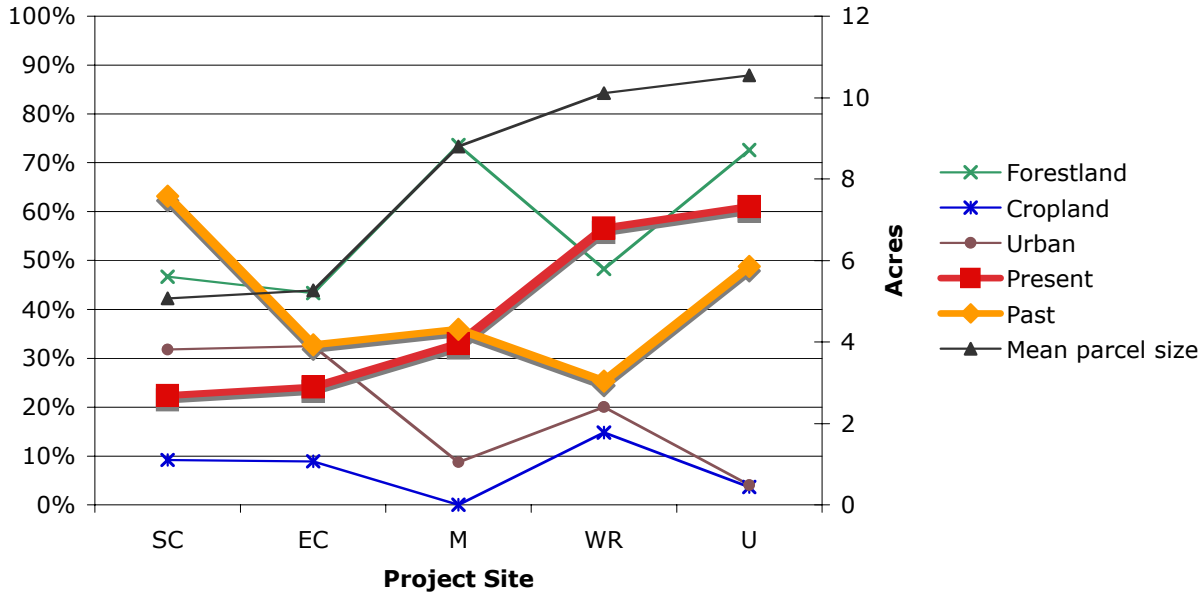


Figure 4.19. Abundance of *present* and *past* narrative guilds across a rural-urban landscape gradient. Abundance = the proportion of discourse segments that feature at least one narrative from a given guild.

Project discourse from Macon County, in short, does not fit very well into the same urban-rural landscape gradient as the POL community projects. In this respect, then, discursive diversity in the Mountains cannot be fully explained through the same measures that were used in the Piedmont: different factors appear to be influencing thematic narrative abundance. This might be expected, since different forces drive landscape change in the two regions: urban growth in the Piedmont and amenity migration in the Mountains (see Section 1.2). Perhaps commuter-driven and amenity-driven landscape changes elicit different discursive responses. If land use histories and challenges differ markedly between regions, then land use may not be a reliable predictor of discursive beta diversity beyond the regional scale.

Other environmental gradients can be used to examine variation across Piedmont and Mountain communities, however. Topography is the most obvious basis for such a gradient, since the two regions are distinguished from each other on a topographical

basis. McGranahan (1999) identified six environmental qualities that influence amenity migration, one of which is *topographic variation*: greater topographic variation generally increases the appeal of a landscape. He rated all the counties in the United States along a 21-point topographic variation scale (1 = least variation; 21 = most variation). Based on this scale, project counties from POL and LTP can be arranged along a topographic variation gradient.

To measure change in narrative abundance against topographic variation, I identified a guild of thematic narrative types that project participants tended to associate with topographic features of the landscape: *access*, *aesthetic*, *amenity*, *hazard*, and *spatial*. The respective conceptual associations between these narrative types and topography are as follows. *Access* often refers to the closing of informal commons, which were characteristically found in more rugged (i.e. less arable) terrain. *Aesthetic* references visually-appealing features of the landscape, which are often distinguished topographically. *Amenity* refers to landscape features that could attract outsiders, which, as McGranahan noted, typically include topographic variation. *Hazards* in the landscape are often associated with topography, e.g. landslides, floods, or dangerous roads. Finally, as discussed in Section 4.5, project participants tended to talk about place in *spatial* terms more frequently when the verticality of the local landscape was more pronounced. I label these narratives collectively as *topographic narratives*.

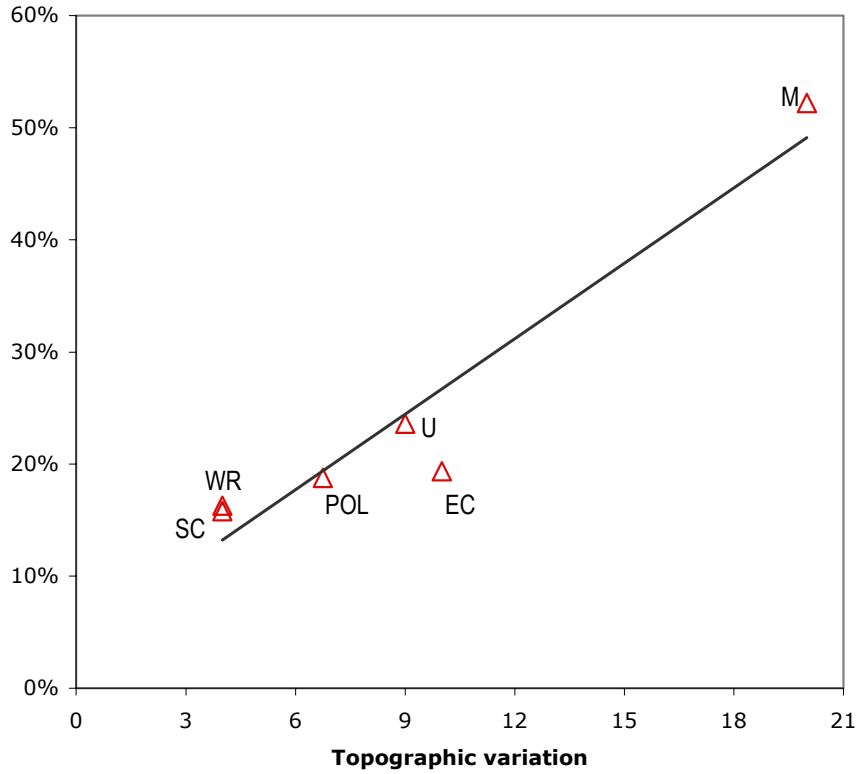


Figure 4.20. Relationship between county-level topographic variation of community project sites and proportional abundance of the *topographic* narrative guild. Proportional abundance reflects the percentage of discourse segments from each community project that employ at least one *topographic* narrative type. Point *POL* represents the average value of the four POL community projects. County-level topographic variation for the Uwharries is based on Montgomery County. Topographic variation scale and scores from McGranahan 1999.

Proportional abundance of the *topographic* narrative guild increases with greater topographic variation, as illustrated by the linear regression line in Figure 4.19. On the whole, project participants in Macon County were much more likely than POL project participants to position themselves through a topographic narrative: such narrative types occurred in more than half of the discourse segments from LTP but less than twenty percent of POL discourse segments. Macon County's topographic variation score (20) also far exceeds the average topographic variation of the POL counties (6.75).

Topographical differences also correspond to narrative variations among the POL communities. Topographic narratives were more prevalent in the hilly Uwharries than in

the relatively flat landscapes of Stanley Creek and Western Rowan. The deviation of Eastern Catawba from this general trend is partly because the topographic variation of Catawba County as a whole exceeds that of the Eastern Catawba County project area: while foothills characterize western Catawba, eastern Catawba has a gently-rolling Piedmont landscape. Topography is actually less prominent in that area than it is amid the Uwharrie ridges.

4.7. Gamma diversity: patterning of Rural North Carolinians' discourse

By pooling the data from LTP and POL, we can examine the discursive practices of all the rural North Carolinians who took part in the projects. To do this, I again used Ward's clustering method to group the discourse segments. The dendrogram in Figure 4.20 illustrates an eighteen cluster solution ($R^2 = 0.515$).

As in Figure 3.41, the color-coding in Figure 4.20 indicates which community projects accounted for the largest number of discourse segments in a cluster; most clusters included discourse from multiple communities. An overall split can be discerned between POL and LTP; each dominates one main branch of the tree. Underlying this split, however, is a distinction in rhetorical context. The first branch is primarily made up of interview excerpts, which are largely devoted to orientation and complication/result. The second branch consists primarily of meeting discourse, with an attendant emphasis on coda.

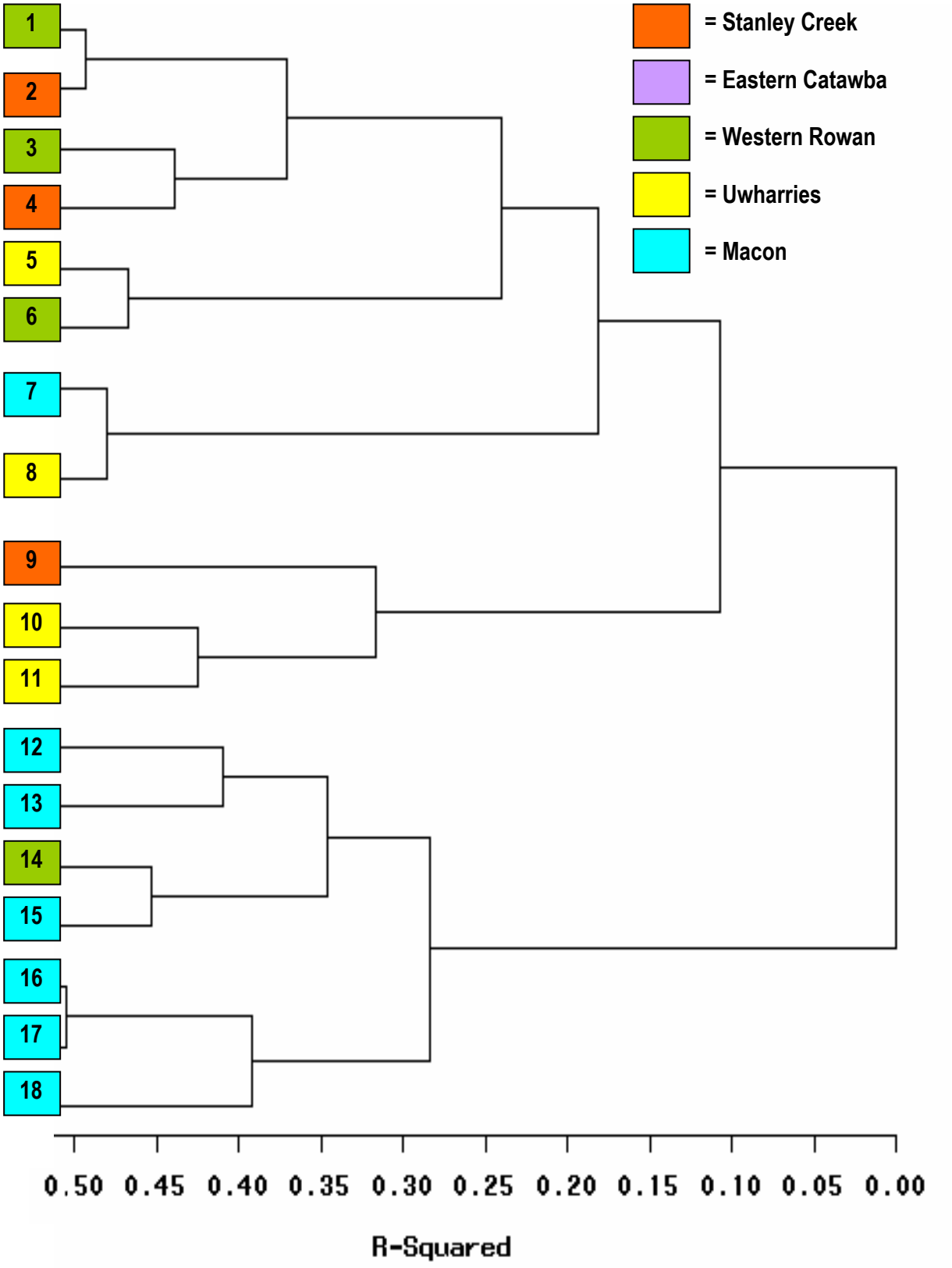


Figure 4.21. Cluster analysis of combined POL and LTP discourse data: dendrogram for 18 clusters. Colors indicate which community's discourse segments occur most frequently in that cluster.

It is also interesting that Stanley Creek discourse predominates in more clusters here than it did in the POL cluster analysis. The Eastern Catawba community project, meanwhile, is not most represented in any of the clusters—suggesting that, in a sense, its discourse is the most "representative" of the combined project discourse as a whole. Eastern Catawbans employed a range of the discursive/narrative practices that were also employed in other community projects, without disproportionately favoring certain ones.

The individual clusters are profiled below.

Cluster 1

Proportion of total segments:	0.0773
Summary description:	Expresses appreciation for the traits that make a place valuable or special.
Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation Orientation—affinity
Thematic narrative attributes:	Non-consumptive instrumental
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"I think the people and the scenery is what makes it so special. I always say it's God's little Eden." (Roberta Swank, Macon)

Cluster 2

Proportion of total segments:	0.0516
Summary description:	Explains how the virtues of a place have been experienced by the speaker, or can be experienced by the listener.
Most-represented community:	Stanley Creek

Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Orientation—affinity
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"We've been retired for about ten years now. We moved up here from South Florida.... Dick and I opted to come and spend a week up here one year, and of course we fell in love with it and with the area. That's how we ended up in this part of the country." (Janet Moulton, Macon)

Cluster 3

Proportion of total segments:	0.0405
Summary description:	Describes what the speaker personally likes to do in a place.
Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Orientation—affinity
Thematic narrative attributes:	Experiential (present-oriented)
Scale:	Individual
Exemplar:	"You can sit in your deer stand and just watch squirrels and birds and everything flying around, running back and forth, and after you sit there a while… they get used to [you]." (Kevin Saunders, Uwharries).

Cluster 4

Proportion of total segments:	0.0203
Summary description:	Affirms a Christian ethic of environmental stewardship.
Most-represented community:	Stanley Creek

Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation
Thematic narrative attributes:	Creedal
Exemplar:	"I think that religion and farming go hand in hand…. Think about God and nature and creation. You see what He's doing. Still doing. Creation's still working, you know, every day. You see it happening. When a calf's born, man can't make that happen. When a crop's planted, you plant a little old seed in the ground that looks one way, and when it comes up, it's completely different. Man can't do that." (William Waller, Western Rowan)

Cluster 5

Proportion of total segments:	0.0589
Summary description:	Describes the lives and livelihoods of people in the local area.
Most-represented community:	Uwharries
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—rationalization
Thematic narrative attributes:	Geographical Consumptive instrumental
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"All these little creeks and branches around here, they got little flaked gold in them. Of course the Coggin's Mine was one of the biggest in the United States, down the road here about three or four miles, at one time. And you can take a pan, get any of these little old branches in the wintertime or summertime, when the creeks are up a

	little bit, you know…. There's a lot of people, that's all they do. Come down here just to gold hunt." (Leonard Simmons, Uwharries)
Cluster 6	
Proportion of total segments:	0.0405
Summary description:	Describes how the land that makes up a given farm or property is put to productive use.
Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—rationalization Orientation—affinity
Thematic narrative attributes:	Consumptive instrumental Geographical
Scale:	Individual
Exemplar:	"The Lazy 5 Ranch is a drive-through animal park, as well as our main business is we supply animals to parks and zoos and put together private collections for people that contain exotic animals as well as rare domestic animals." (Henry Hampton, Western Rowan)
Cluster 7	
Proportion of total segments:	0.046
Summary description:	Assesses changes that are taking place in the landscape and identifies desirable future change.
Most-represented community:	Macon
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation Complication—change

Thematic narrative attributes:	Geographical
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"There is a pattern here. When a person first retires in this area, you know, you go out on some remote, beautiful, isolated area beside a stream.... By the time they get to their eighties they want to move back into town…. And my concept, I'd like to see the city of Franklin…. You know, really develop those kinds of apartments or condominiums.... Where people can live close together and they can walk to their doctor, and walk to the grocery store…. Yet you still look out and see the Nantahalas and the Cowees up from your patio, you know." (Bill Crawford, Macon)

Cluster 8

Proportion of total segments:	0.1363
Summary description:	Recounts the losses that the community has suffered as land uses have changed.
Most-represented community:	Uwharries
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Complication—change Result—loss
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (problem-oriented)
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"But farming and sawmilling, of course, was, you know, the thing in this area and then, of course, as time went on, their children began to have to drive off to work, be it Asheboro or Thomasville—believe it or not, a lot of people went from here to Thomasville to the chair factory, commuted everyday. Now back then they carpooled, something like that, you know. But they had to go somewhere to get work, because there wasn't enough farming to keep everyone going farming, of course, and it's the small farm you know. We ended up with beef cattle here the last thing. We got out of the chicken business and had beef cattle and then finally got

out of that." (Bobby Hall, Uwharries)

Cluster 9

Proportion of total segments:	0.0663
Summary description:	Characterizes a community in terms of shared heritage and cultural traits.
Most-represented community:	Stanley Creek
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Orientation—heritage
Thematic narrative attributes:	Identity
Exemplar:	"I think there's a bit of a, a bit of a sense of isolation in, in [this] area that I think has affected people's outlook or their psyche or however you want to call that. Now I think that people—you know, you say about Southerners in general that we have this kind of fierce independence and we don't want the government telling us what to do or, or any kind of organized body—but I think even, even here it's even a bit stronger." (Ruth Ann Grissom, Uwharries)

Cluster 10

Proportion of total segments:	0.0534
Summary description:	Recalls how the speaker's family used to sustain themselves from their land.
Most-represented community:	Uwharries
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Orientation—heritage
Thematic narrative attributes:	Consumptive instrumental

Scale:	Individual
Exemplar:	"I can remember so vividly cleaning out that spring. See, it was just a little washed-out place, you know, and we knew where it was, and we kept it clean. You know, there would be leaves and debris in there, and it wouldn't be long 'till that water would just be trickling out, and you could take a dipper and dip it out and put it in the bucket and go give everybody a drink." (Mamie Cole, Stanley Creek)

Cluster 11

Proportion of total segments:	0.0755
Summary description:	Describes the community ethos that emerged from a shared experience of place.
Most-represented community:	Uwharries
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Interview, meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—mythopoesis Orientation—heritage
Thematic narrative attributes:	Identity
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"Me and my boys used to clean out all the springs. I knew where every spring was in the county" (Claude Morris, Uwharries)

Cluster 12

Proportion of total segments:	0.0479
Summary description:	Advocates non-regulatory/incentive-based protections for property owners as a means of protecting valued community assets.
Most-represented community:	Macon
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary,	Meeting, interview

secondary):	
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (solution-oriented)
Scale:	Individual
Exemplar:	"Tax incentives for large parcels used for farming/logging or family use." (Macon)

Cluster 13

Proportion of total segments:	0.0405
Summary description:	Advocates economic development strategies that will improve the financial outlook for local residents.
Most-represented community:	Macon
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Eastern Catawba, Western Rowan
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Consumptive instrumental
Exemplar:	"Macon County needs to develop infrastructure to attract industry that will bring jobs other than those in service industry. Keep young people here." (Macon County)

Cluster 14

Proportion of total segments:	0.0424
Summary description:	Urges citizens to collectively determine the future of their local landscape.
Most-represented community:	Western Rowan
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Legitimation—evaluation Coda—collective

Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (solution-oriented)
Exemplar:	"I think definitely that the community or the county should have some say, have laws, because I think that would be much better than the individual." (Dee Smith, Macon)

Cluster 15

Proportion of total segments:	0.0589
Summary description:	Endorses collective solutions to challenges the community is facing.
Most-represented community:	Macon
Other communities represented:	All
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (solution-oriented)
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"There's got to be a more graceful way to bring these two groups of people with these different experiences together, so we can protect what is important to all of us. I think it's playing out in Macon County right now." (Bill McLarney, Macon)

Cluster 16

Proportion of total segments:	0.0902
Summary description:	Recommends management strategies that distinguish among appropriate uses for different parts of the landscape.
Most-represented community:	Macon
Other communities represented:	Stanley Creek, Western Rowan
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—collective

Thematic narrative attributes:	Geographical Management (solution-oriented)
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"I would put a restrictive order that they could not build high up on the mountain." (Alice Wooten, Macon)

Cluster 17

Proportion of total segments:	0.0203
Summary description:	Identifies problems or undesirable changes that need to be addressed.
Most-represented community:	Macon
Other communities represented:	Western Rowan, Uwharries
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting, interview
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Management (problem-oriented)
Scale:	Community
Exemplar:	"I'd like to see it stay about the same, you know—not to be developed anymore." (Kevin Saunders, Uwharries)

Cluster 18

Proportion of total segments:	0.0331
Summary description:	Urges the community to protect the health and beauty of the local environment for benefit of residents and visitors alike.
Most-represented community:	Macon
Other communities represented:	---
Context (primary, secondary):	Meeting
Functional narrative attributes:	Coda—collective
Thematic narrative attributes:	Non-consumptive instrumental
Exemplar:	"Want limited night lighting." (Macon)

The foregoing analysis characterizes the gamma diversity of the community projects' discursive landscape; however, it can also help us to understand community members' relationships with the biophysical landscape. In the discourse clusters we can discern the outlines of an archetypical *symbolic landscape* that rural North Carolinians negotiate, in which biophysical *places* are "imbue[d] with meaning" through community discourse (Crumley and Marquardt 1987: 1; see discussion in Section 1.5.3). The notion that communities attach meanings to particular places recalls Climo and Cattell's concept of "mnemonic sites" (2002), Basso's "place-worlds" (1996), and Allen's "genealogical landscape" (1990). Unlike those, however, this symbolic landscape is not necessarily past-oriented; POL and LTP participants also invested places with present-day concerns and hopes for the future.

The intersection of the biophysical and the discursive in the symbolic landscape can be illustrated through the example of springs. Springs often came up in the community project interviews, and their mention was always used to communicate one or both of the following related messages: 1) the speaker, her family, or her community was able to derive sustenance from their land, and 2) the speaker/family/community knew where the sites that provided sustenance were located. The exemplar quotations from clusters 10 and 11 show how springs can be invoked as a resource for the family and the community, respectively. Springs are useful sites for conveying *self-sufficiency* and *knowledge* because they were once centrally important to life in rural North Carolina, but the advent of well-drilling and centralized water supplies have rendered them peripheral. By describing how he maintains or has maintained springs, a speaker indicates that his knowledge of the local landscape is long-standing and intimate enough to encompass the

locations and proper usage of those springs. The implication is that newcomers would not know where local springs are, grasp their historic significance, or know how to effectively derive sustenance from them.

Just as springs themselves are regarded as symbols of knowledge and self-sufficiency, stories about maintaining springs can be seen as *metonyms* for knowledge and self-sufficiency narratives: they reference those narratives without explicitly naming them. A speaker would be unlikely to explicitly say the following: "When I was growing up, our community was largely self-sufficient, and as a result I know a lot about how to derive sustenance from this landscape—much more than the newcomers do." By describing how she maintained a spring, however, the speaker can convey the same points.

Landscape change becomes contentious when competing meanings are attached to the same places, which typically happens in parts of the landscape that become valuable for development. Should the forested hillsides be regarded as an informal commons or an aesthetically-pleasing location for vacation homes? Are the well-drained fields more desirable for crop cultivation or residential septic fields? Such questions pit values and constituencies against each other. The eventual use of these places will depend on which narratives are more persuasively invoked when discussing them.

Springs, forested slopes, and well-drained fields are part of the shared symbolic landscape revealed through POL and LTP: their symbolic meanings and metonymic deployment were largely consistent throughout the project discourse. Specific places may only take on symbol significance in particular community discourses, however, such as the Rhyne homeplace in Stanley Creek, campgrounds in Eastern Catawba, or the

southward corridor in Macon. While invoking archetypical symbols can establish regional rhetorical competence, local competence requires familiarity with locality-specific symbols.

To achieve maximal effectiveness in communities, resource management agents should become versed in the local symbolic landscape, because it is the context in which their actions will be judged. An understanding of the meanings attached to different parts of the landscape can inform the design of campaigns—the symbolic significance of sites designated for protection should be taken into account, for example. Agents ignore these meanings at their peril: the appropriate use of symbols can lend credence to an initiative, but their inappropriate use can doom it. "Appropriate use of symbols" requires a familiarity with the local narratives about a place and an understanding of their metonymic properties.

Negotiating symbolism becomes more difficult when the meanings of a place are contested. In such a case, an agent may have to consciously choose which meaning to honor by deciding which constituency is most crucial to a campaign's success. She can then court that constituency on its own symbolic terms, while attempting to mollify competing constituencies in other ways.

By characterizing the discursive practices of LTP and POL participants at the alpha, beta, and gamma levels, we can develop a sort of rhetorical toolbox, which can be used by community members, resource management agents, and researchers[33] in designing and conducting future community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) initiatives. The challenge then becomes one of selecting the right tool for the job, rather than uncritically transplanting symbols or narratives between contexts.

[33] These are not mutually exclusive categories!

Attentiveness to discursive scaling must be maintained in order to anticipate which messages are likely to resonate with a local, regional, or inter-regional constituency.

4.8. Conclusion

The *Little Tennessee Perspectives* (LTP) project offers insight into the potential of discursive CBNRM, both in its own right and through comparison to POL. Using an enhanced iterative participatory research model (IPRM), the research team succeeded in capturing a spectrum of community responses to amenity-driven landscape change. Proceeding from salient ecological narratives that were articulated in interviews, we were able to create more empowering spaces for community dialogue about resource management issues: the well-attended public meetings demonstrated that a carefully-designed process could overcome the negativity and intolerance that had characterized previous discussions. The project did not overcome the profound inconsistencies that characterized the local discourse, but it did show how rearticulation of discursive elements could help to transcend entrenched conflicts, at least temporarily.

Comparing the discourse data from the POL and LTP revealed a surprising degree of similarity. Many narrative types and discursive formations were shared across regions, suggesting the existence of a partially-shared interpretive repertoire through which residents of the North Carolina Piedmont and Mountains negotiate their symbolic landscapes. At the same time, the proportional abundances of narrative types varied among regions, just as they had among communities in the POL project region. In some cases, these variations in abundance were demonstrably linked to differences in the biophysical landscapes that project participants called home. Macon County's

mountainous landscape was also distinguished from its Piedmont counterparts by its locally-specific symbolic associations. A resource management agent from the Piedmont might be able to recognize the categories of speech that Maconians use to address landscape change, but she would find that those categories were being used in unfamiliar ways.

The scaling and persuasiveness of the project narratives that I have introduced over the last two chapters will be interrogated in Chapter Five, when I review the findings of the POL/LTP evaluation process.

Chapter 5

EVALUATING THE RESEARCH MODEL

5.1. Introduction: the importance of evaluation in participatory research

On the evening July 10, 2006, approximately one year after the *Little Tennessee Perspectives* public meetings, an overflow crowd packed into the courtroom of the Macon County Courthouse for a hearing concerning a proposed Subdivision Control Ordinance. Many citizens had been attracted to the meeting by a full-page advertisement in the free weekly newspaper, Macon County News, which warned of the onerous burdens that the proposed ordinance would place on property owners. Most speakers at the hearing condemned the ordinance. An elderly woman began crying as she expressed fears that the proposed regulations would force her to sell the family property that she hoped to pass on to her grandchildren. After aquatic biologist Bill McLarney commented that rules governing subdivisions would help protect the health of the Little Tennessee River, developer Van Rogers attacked "environmentalists" in his remarks: "They want that dirt down in the creek so they can tell you what a terrible job developers are doing." Other speakers complained that the standards for subdivision approval were not made clear in the ordinance (*Franklin Press* [Franklin], 14 July 2006).

In fact, standards for subdivision approval were not clearly expressed in the document because no new standards were being introduced: the proposed ordinance

would only require that plats (maps of the subdivision) be submitted for review to check compliance with *existing* state and local regulations. The county agencies that reviewed the plats could comment on their compliance with those laws, but they would have no authority to deny approval (*Franklin Press* [Franklin], 14 July 2006b). In short, rather than being a draconian measure that threatened the economic future of property owners and the real estate industry, this Subdivision Control Ordinance would be minimal to the point of meaninglessness.

The furor that had erupted at the public hearing reflected a deliberate misinformation campaign on the part of certain real estate/development interests who were responsible for the misleading attack ad in the Macon County News.[34] The effectiveness of this inflammatory strategy, however, reflected the degree of suspicion and confusion that has continued to surround land use planning issues in Macon County. Despite its popularity, the *Little Tennessee Perspectives* project had clearly not fully succeeded in ensuring "inclusive, informed, and ongoing" civic dialogue on landscape change.

Of course, it is not necessarily appropriate or realistic to expect a participatory research intervention like ours to immediately restructure the public debate around such a contentious issue; however, it is important to establish some measures of success. A year after the LTP public process, it was easy for both community partners and researchers to feel demoralized sometimes: damaging public debates, such as the one surrounding the proposed Subdivision Control Ordinance, made us feel as if we had accomplished

[34] The ad was listed as being paid for by "taxpayers and landowners of Macon County dedicated to protecting our mountains and our rights" (*Franklin Press* [Franklin], 14 July 2006a). However, I have spoken with reliable local sources who attribute it to a particular group of real estate agents, developers, and property-rights advocates.

nothing. On the other hand, the fact that even a minimal subdivision ordinance was being considered represented an expansion of the "boundaries of the possible" (see Section 2.11) in the local discourse on collective natural resource management—boundaries that the LTP project had helped to expand (see Section 5.2.6). So was the project a success, a failure, or both, and how could the project team learn from the past in order to improve future capacity-building efforts? To answer these questions, we embarked on a participatory evaluation of our own work.

Evaluating a participatory research project is vital to ensuring that it is meeting community partners' and researchers' goals. As discussed in Section 2.11, the *iterative participatory research model* (IPRM) that we developed through the *Perspectives on Land* (POL) and LTP projects treats evaluation as integral part of the participatory research process (Israel et al. 2005): evaluation by community members is used to corroborate analyses at each stage (see Section 2.3). The final stage of evaluation, which I describe in this chapter, takes place after the project's public "intervention" has already taken place and the research has entered the "public sphere" (Cox 2006). This process enables the project team to assess the relevance of the project to the discursive life of the community by considering its positive and negative effects (or lack of effect). Even more importantly, it offers an opportunity to improve the ongoing relevance of the initiative: lessons derived from past experience can help the team reposition and renew its efforts.

My community partners and I began an evaluation of POL/LTP in 2006 that, at the time of this writing (Spring 2007), is still ongoing. From an analytical perspective, this evaluation process gave me the opportunity to undertake a deductive assessment of my inductive inferences regarding ecological discourse. This shift represented a

progression from the first of my guiding research questions (see Section 1.1) to the second: *If framed through local ecological discourse, can rationales for collective natural resource management attract broader public support and involvement, thereby potentially enhancing communities' capacity to protect valued environmental assets?*

To operationalize this question for the evaluation process, I focused my inquiry on two measures: *demonstrated relevance* and *potential relevance*. The first would reflect evidence that project narratives had already helped to motivate collective natural resource management action in the communities where the projects took place. The second would reflect the narratives' expected ability to motivate such action among community members at large, including those who had not previously been involved. I phrased the two measures as guiding evaluation questions:

1. Were the narratives identified through the POL/LTP community projects relevant enough to help build collective natural resource management capacity in the communities where they took place?
2. Are the identified narratives relevant not only to past project participants but also to non-participants, thus demonstrating potential to support broader community engagement in future natural resource management initiatives?

The latter question was further divided into two sub-questions:

1. Are the emergent ecological narratives that were identified through a given community project resonant among local residents who did not participate in that project?
2. How does the resonance of project narratives vary across the communities?

The conceptual organization of the evaluation process is diagrammed in Figure 5.1.

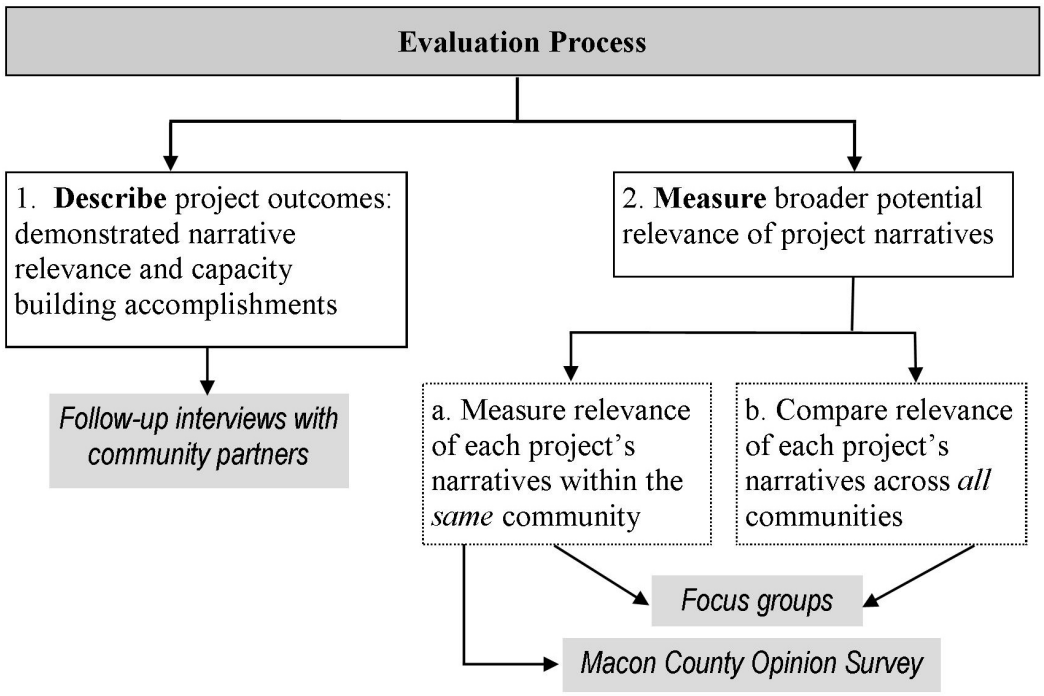


Figure 5.1. Conceptual diagram of the POL/LTP evaluation process.

The evaluation was designed to serve the interests of both community partners and researchers, which were compatible but distinct. As a researcher, evaluation represented an opportunity for me to critique and refine IPRM by ascertaining the methodology's effectiveness in articulating locally-relevant ecological narratives. For my community partners, evaluation was a chance to collect information that could bolster and inform future campaigns.

In this chapter, I begin by addressing the first of the preceding research questions by reviewing developments at each community project site following the completion of the public meetings. Next, I will address the second question by reviewing the findings of two evaluative instruments: focus groups and a sample survey. Drawing upon insights from the evaluation process, I will then propose a protocol for discursive evaluation of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) initiatives. Finally, I will

reflect on the broader implications of this research for ecology and natural resource management.

5.2. Gauging intervention effects: post-project developments in participating communities

During summer and fall 2006, I conducted follow-up interviews with my partners from each POL/LTP community project, as well as staff members from the land trusts that sponsored POL. I asked them to recount what had happened in their communities since our public meetings were held and to identify what, if anything, had changed as a result of the community projects. Based on these interviews, as supplemented by documents and my own observations, I have summarized the known impacts of the projects in each context.

5.2.1. Stanley Creek

Richard Rankin and Joyce Burt attested to the tremendous galvanizing effect that the POL meeting had on participating community members. "That day was spectacular," Rankin said. Simply gathering so many concerned citizens into one space was a novel achievement in Stanley Creek; the meeting provided an opportunity for networking and established a list of contacts that Burt would subsequently draw upon. Creating a space for face-to-face connections, then, established the essential preconditions for building community solidarity. It was the nature of those connections, however, that established the solidarity. Participants realized that other community members shared their sense of connection to the local landscape and their concerns about its future. In this sense, the meeting functioned something like a support group for "Land Lovers Anonymous."

According to Rankin, "it strengthened… the conservation ethic among the people… who live along the Creek."

The energy from the initial meeting was not immediately channeled into the establishment of a community organization or regularly scheduled community meetings, which Burt and Rankin see as a missed opportunity. However, the conservation constituency identified through the project was later mobilized by Burt and other community members to oppose a 1000-acre, 2000-home subdivision that was planned for the community. A citizens' group was organized around this issue and a contact list of concerned community members was created. Members of the group researched different aspects of the proposed development in order to build a case against it. Enough problems with the proposal were revealed that the town of Mount Holly refused to provide water and sewer service to the development site, effectively killing the project. Both Burt and Rankin see this successful community campaign as the main achievement that resulted from the POL intervention.

In the meantime, several more Stanley Creek landowners have protected their land through Catawba Lands Conservancy, expanding the community's conservation corridor even as the sprawl of metropolitan Charlotte engulfs the surrounding region. However, Rankin warns that the owner of the property where the development was blocked has not given up: he will eventually try to develop it again. Burt and Rankin disagree as to the appropriate next steps: Burt favors continuing to oppose the development through grassroots advocacy, while Rankin favors working with the developer to encourage a more sustainable subdivision design.

According to Burt and Rankin, the POL project in Stanley Creek did help to build community capacity in the form of effective grassroots organization. At the same time, they feel that the project's full potential for stimulating ongoing civic dialogue was not harnessed: collective action in Stanley Creek is still reactive, not proactive. After the defeat of the proposed development, the citizens' group stopped meeting, though they are still in touch and ready to mobilize on short notice. Burt and Rankin do not believe that the same kind of community association that could have been formed in 2003 could be formed today: the elders who remember the history of Stanley Creek are dying out, and most of the residents now are newcomers. The document created by the Stanley Creek community project may already represent a community that no longer exists.

5.2.2. Eastern Catawba

Paul Beatty, Robert Eades, and Jerry McCombs also attested to an increased sense of solidarity among participants in the POL meeting that was held in eastern Catawba County. For McCombs, the meeting demonstrated that community members "really felt the same way" about the area and "how we'd like to see things" in the future. "I think it was a good thing for the community," he concluded. However, the project did not lead to any new forms of collective action among community members. Its one identifiable contribution to community capacity-building, according to Beatty and McCombs, lay in its intersection with the Small Area Planning process that was taking place in the county at the time. The POL documentary and meeting helped planning committee members to more clearly identify community values and thereby informed the development of the Balls Creek Small Area Plan.

As in Stanley Creek, 2003 seemed like a long time ago to my Eastern Catawba community partners. Suburban development has exploded across the local landscape in the past few years, especially along the shores of Lake Norman. Just across the lake in Mooresville, the NASCAR stock-car racing industry is booming, and eastern Catawba is prime territory for the mini-estates of racing team employees.[35] Beatty said that the community as he knew it has "completely changed." The value of the POL document, then, is already archival: it is a portrait of the community in 2003, but no longer a relevant tool today.

However, further capacity-building may yet emerge from the Eastern Catawba partnership. During his follow-up interview, Beatty identified his main disappointment from the POL community project: that the project did not lead to further work by Catawba Lands Conservancy in the community. As previously noted, Eastern Catawba was the POL project site that had had the least prior involvement with the sponsoring land trusts. The project apparently did not remedy this disconnect. However, during my conversations with Beatty and Eades in December 2006, we identified a new potential role for the Conservancy in the community. In 2006, Catawba County finally completed a new zoning ordinance, which incorporates the Small Area Plans that were being designed in 2003. Eades explained that the ordinance includes a "contractual zoning" provision, whereby a developer can request increased housing density on part of a property if he agrees to leave another part of the property—or a different property—undeveloped. This arrangement could enable the preservation of significant undeveloped

[35] In the surreal world of modern stock-car racing, according to Eades, a pit mechanic can earn $150,000/year just for changing one tire of a racecar. The pit crew chief can earn $600,000/year. When these income figures are multiplied by all of the tires on all of the cars on the NASCAR circuit, he explains, one can begin to perceive the formidable economic engine that is driving demand for upscale housing in the region.

tracts in the county. Eades, Beatty, and I recognized an opportunity for Catawba Lands Conservancy to participate in this arrangement, as they are well suited to receive and protect these tracts, either through outright ownership or easement.

I relayed this possibility to Conservancy Executive Director Dave Cable, who was enthusiastic: undeveloped land is becoming increasingly scarce and expensive around Charlotte, so he is seeking new approaches to land protection. Protecting properties through the Catawba County contractual zoning procedure would be a great opportunity in this regard, because developers would underwrite the process. However, without my liaising, the parties involved might never have made contact. This example illustrates how participatory researchers can benefit both communities and conservation: the researcher, through familiarity with the discourses of both the community and the conservation organization, can help facilitate new kinds of collaboration.

5.2.3. Western Rowan

Like Burt and Rankin, Adele Goodman described being unprepared for the emotional potency of the POL documentary and community meeting. "I had no clue," she said. "I didn't realize it would be as big as this was…. It got me in the gut…. If I died tomorrow it would be one of the things I'm most proud about." Before we began the project, she had felt "like I was on this island alone, and I was the only one that cared" about protecting the local landscape. Through conducting interviews and holding the meeting, however, she started meeting "all these neat, like-minded people," which was "a breath of fresh air."

The Western Rowan meeting was unique in that community members identified a desired collective action step that was subsequently realized. As described previously,

meeting participants identified the need for an email list/phone tree that could be used to notify local residents about policy issues that affected them and organize collective responses. Following the meeting, Goodman established such a list, starting with contact information collected from interested meeting participants. She then upgraded the list into a full-fledged email newsletter, entitled *Focus on Farming*. Though the newsletter proved too time-consuming for her to maintain, she has continued to send out periodic "Focus on Farming Alerts" about issues pertinent to the community. Through the Focus on Farming email list, as supplemented by phone contacts and word of mouth (which, she notes, "spreads a lot quicker than email ever will"), Goodman could quickly mobilize large numbers of community members. The POL project had significantly enlarged her social network and bolstered her confidence and credibility to draw upon that network.

As in Stanley Creek, the most resounding demonstration of Western Rowan community's increased capacity came in response to a particularly grave threat: the announcement, by the City Council of Kannapolis in neighboring Cabarrus County, of plans to sell 2,843 acres of land in western Rowan County. The land had originally been acquired to build a reservoir for Kannapolis, but the reservoir had never been constructed, and local farmers had continued to lease much of the land. In 2004, the City Council decided that they were never going to use this property and decided to sell it to the highest bidder. Goodman and other community members were quick to realize that the development of this huge tract in the heart of the community would have a disastrous effect on the integrity of the socio-cultural and biophysical landscape. The LandTrust for Central North Carolina decided to try to purchase the tract to preclude its development, but this was a daunting proposition: the organization would need to raise millions of

dollars, more than they had ever amassed before, which would take time. Even then, the LandTrust was unlikely to be able to out-bid developers, so a strong show of citizen support at Kannapolis City Council meetings was critical in swaying the Council to favor their bid. Goodman called upon the Focus on Farming network, and large numbers of Western Rowan farmers and community members went to the Council meetings to back the LandTrust. Others contacted the Council members directly.

By all accounts, this community mobilization was vital in convincing the Council to strike a deal with the LandTrust, which is now acquiring the tract in phases. When the transfer is complete, the Kannapolis tract will represent perhaps the largest conservation property ever protected within an equivalent distance of Charlotte.

As the Kannapolis tract victory indicates, Goodman was able to use the momentum from the POL project to increase the Western Rowan community's capacity to collectively influence the management of the local landscape. The Focus on Farming network, like the Stanley Creek group, only represents reactive collective action; it is not an organization with its own agenda. Nonetheless, it represents a significant shift from a population of formerly isolated individuals.

5.2.4. Uwharries

I have not been able to conduct a follow-up interview with Ruth Ann Grissom, due to an ongoing health crisis in her family; therefore, I cannot provide a full account of the project aftermath in the Uwharries. This account is based on my own observations and the testimony of Kevin Redding, the former LandTrust staff member who worked in the Uwharrie region.

Based on the enthusiastic response to the original POL meeting in the Uwharries, the project team decided to convene a follow-up meeting a year later. The follow-up meeting was held at the Ophir Community Center on February 5, 2005, and was attended by more than fifty people. I began the meeting with a project update that placed the Uwharries in regional context by presenting information and images from the POL exhibit that was running simultaneously at Charlotte's Levine Museum of the New South. Since many community members would not be able to travel to distant Charlotte and see the exhibit, this was a means of once again returning the research to the community. During the rest of the meeting, Redding updated the group on LandTrust projects, and meeting participants discussed conservation options in greater detail than they had at the initial meeting.

Redding does not attribute any specific resource management achievements in the Uwharries to the influence of the POL project, but the LandTrust did continue to take advantage of the community support for conservation that emerged from the public meetings. In 2006, community members responded enthusiastically to the LandTrust's protection of a large tract flanking the Uwharrie River at Low Water Bridge, a site identified by POL participants as having particular local significance. Also in the past year, the LandTrust, local landowners, and Environmental Defense put together a study tour for U.S. Forest Service staff members in order to encourage the greater consideration of the local biophysical and socio-cultural landscape in the development of the forthcoming Uwharrie National Forest Management Plan. The tour was arranged by the UNC-Chapel Hill Current Issues in Ecology (ECOL 199) seminar, co-taught by Amy Cooke and myself. This is another case in which connections forged through

participatory research facilitated new opportunities for improving the local relevance of resource management initiatives.

5.2.5. POL's sponsoring land trusts

POL was originally conceived as an outreach initiative for the two sponsoring land trusts, Catawba Lands Conservancy and the LandTrust for Central North Carolina. As such, it was designed not only to get rural community members involved in talking about resource management issues, but also to inform the outreach and conservation work of the land trusts themselves: the insights gained into the rural ecological discourses, it was anticipated, would enable them to connect with broader rural constituencies. While improving the discursive competence of resource management agents in rural communities remains an important objective of my research, however, that research has yet to make a noticeable impact on the operations of the two organizations. This assessment was affirmed by staff members whom I interviewed during December 2006: Executive Director Dave Cable and Outreach and Education Director Rhea Kelley at Catawba, and Executive Director Jason Walser and then-Associate Director Kevin Redding at the LandTrust.

POL's lack of effect on the land trusts' strategies is primarily due to the fact that I have not yet fulfilled the project's mandate: I have not yet returned the research findings to the sponsors in a form that they can readily apply to their work. Until I do this, the organizations will not be able to fully apprehend the implications that the research has for their praxis. Another impediment is staff turnover: neither of the executive directors who originally commissioned the project still lead the land trusts, and most other positions have turned over as well.

In order to consider how a discursive, participatory approach could benefit the land trusts, I asked the staff members at each organization to assess their own community outreach programs. In both cases, they characterized their community outreach efforts as primarily opportunistic: taking advantage of vehicles for spreading their message when those vehicles presented themselves, rather than pursuing an overall strategic outreach plan. The land trusts' base of support, according to these staffers, consists of a narrow, middle-to-upper class demographic, while the rest of the region's population remains largely oblivious or indifferent.[36]

When I suggested that insights from the POL/LTP studies might be able to help the land trusts achieve greater relevance among a broader array of local constituencies, however, Catawba staff members expressed more interest in this possibility than LandTrust staff. The difference in their reactions relates to the difference in the two organizations' jurisdictions. In Catawba's service area, which encompasses booming Charlotte, undeveloped land is becoming scarce and expensive. Cable sees the era of protecting large rural tracts as coming to an end. Therefore, he is actively seeking new roles and new sources of community support for the Conservancy. The LandTrust's service area, by contrast, remains largely rural, and significant swaths of relatively-affordable land are still able to be protected—indeed, the organization has a backlog of

[36] In a 2006 report for Catawba Lands Conservancy, the marketing firm Belgrave Associates used a "lifestyle segmentation tool" that draws upon US Census data, local demographic sources, and consumer records to identify the Conservancy's "core donors." Out of 66 possible profiles, the following four groups were determined as composing this core: *Upper Crust* ("Wealthiest lifestyle in U.S."), *Blue Blood Estates* ("2nd wealthiest lifestyle"), *Second City Elite* ("Prosperous executives" in "satellite cities"), and *Upward Bound* ("Soccer Moms and Dads… upper-class with dual incomes"). The thrust of the report was that the Conservancy's messages have heretofore been most successful in appealing to these kinds of people, so their future outreach efforts should concentrate on trying to reach more potential supporters from these same groups.

projects. Therefore, Walser does not see a need to rethink the LandTrust's strategy: working opportunistically with large landowners is still proving quite effective.

5.2.6. Macon

As described in Chapter Four, the design of *Little Tennessee Perspectives* enabled the project to have more pervasive discursive impact in Macon County than any of the POL community projects had in their sites: LTP's high-profile and multiple public meetings, extensive media coverage, relatively-controversial subject matter, and project team follow-up efforts have had a sustained effect on civic dialogue around landscape change. That said, the project's record of building community natural resource management capacity remains equivocal.

Short-term effects of the LTP process on public discourse were evident after the meetings concluded. The week after the last of the four LTP meetings, the Macon County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on a proposed High Impact Ordinance, designed to offer minimal protections to property owners from particularly noxious land uses. Although the ordinance itself did not address any of the central concerns expressed during the LTP interviews and meetings, such as development on mountainsides or affordable housing, the hearing was dominated by people who had attended the LTP meetings. They thanked the commission for considering regulations on high impact uses but overwhelmingly requested that the commissioners consider and enact much more stringent land use controls to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area. In a marked departure from previous planning ordinance hearings in Macon County, the vast majority of speakers (77%) advocated for increased community action to protect landscape and cultural assets. At this hearing, the project team also presented the

commissioners with the comment cards written directly to them by LTP participants (see Section 4.3.5). The High Impact Ordinance later passed.

Though the County Commissioners themselves never publicly responded to any input from LTP participants, the project's effect on policy discourse continued through the deliberations of the County Planning Board. According to Planning Director Stacy Guffey and Planning Board Member Susan Ervin, LTP has had a significant effect on the Planning Board's agenda. In fact, the merits of the research itself were the subject of considerable debate at Board meetings—particularly the imagery produced by Norwood that depicted the projected development of a local mountain ridge (see Box 4.2). One board member, who had surveyed the depicted development, and another member who is a property-rights advocate, vociferously denounced any environmental, safety, or aesthetic objections to constructing numerous mansions on a steep, partially denuded mountainside. The surveyor was quoted in the newspaper criticizing LTP as not "factual at all" and also objecting to the fact that the project was "funded by grants" (*Franklin Press* [Franklin], 25 October 2005).[37] These remarks, in turn, prompted a series of letters

[37] These criticisms illustrate one of the challenges peculiar to participatory research: researchers' assumptions about validity may not square with those of community members. From Norwood's and my perspective, receiving foundation funding—as opposed to consulting fees, say, or corporate sponsorship—bolstered our credibility as "unbiased" researchers; from the board members' perspective, however, grants represented external funding sources with unknown agendas, so he regarded them with suspicion.

The accusation that the research was not "factual at all" raises an even trickier issue, concerning the kinds of research inferences that are considered credible by community members. Neither Norwood's future development scenarios nor my interpretive analyses of discourse were "factual," in the sense that they did not correspond to empirically-observable phenomena on the landscape. Moreover, we made no claims as to their "factuality;" their legitimacy rested instead on well-established principles of intellectual inquiry. Our research was not being evaluated on the same epistemological terms in which we presented it.

This discrepancy demonstrates the importance of maintaining epistemic transparency in participatory research environments, lest findings be misconstrued or misrepresented. Ideally, achieving metacommunicative competence in a community should help a researcher or resource management agent to achieve such transparency by helping her to anticipate the interpretive frames through which community members will evaluate her arguments.

to the editor concerning this individual, some condemning his development practices and others rising to his defense.

The aforementioned digression into *ad hominem* bickering aside, LTP had propelled the issue of steep slope development to the top of the Planning Board's agenda. A subcommittee, chaired by Susan Ervin, was convened to explore possibilities for steep slope regulation. The establishment of the Steep Slope Subcommittee demonstrated the ability of IPRM to translate a concern expressed through community narrative into a policy action item. Through interviews with community members, we had identified mountainside development as a frequently cited concern. We had then focused attention on the issue through the documentary and geospatial analyses. As a result, the Planning Board had finally decided to consider a resource management issue of profound local concern. However, this achievement was short-lived. The majority of appointees to the Subcommittee were involved in development, construction, or real estate. This majority decided at the Subcommittee's first meeting that the county had no need of steep slope development regulations and voted to disband the committee, despite the objections of Ervin and other members.

Evidence from the media, meanwhile, suggested that the effects of our "discursive intervention" on community discourse had extended beyond direct discussion of the project. Landscape change data from LTP continued to be cited, including in three newspaper editorials. Landscape terminology introduced during the project, such as *viewshed*, entered the community lexicon. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that, since the project was conducted, values have been more frequently connected to planning issues in newspaper stories and letters to the editor.

In the months that followed the LTP public meetings and High Impact Ordinance hearing, the project team did not provide ongoing ways for project participants to remain engaged in resource management issues—a lapse that multiple community partners have since identified as the team's greatest mistake. Norwood and I had facilitated several meetings with our community partners to encourage them to consider next steps following the public meetings. However, the team did not develop a definitive follow-up plan or allocate responsibilities for carrying it out. In addition, immediately following the hearing, several of the team members left the community for extended periods: Ben Brown went to the Gulf Coast to help with Hurricane Katrina reconstruction efforts, while Norwood and I returned to UNC for fall semester. Neither Guffey and Ervin, as public officials, nor Norwood and I, as outside researchers, felt that our roles were appropriate for leading community organizing efforts. As a result, much of the citizen energy that had been created through the LTP meetings dissipated for lack of an outlet. Rancorous policy deliberations signaled a reversion of community discourse towards polarized debate and away from the sense of possibility and collaboration that had accompanied LTP.

There was a short resurgence of participatory activity six months after the public meetings. The project team organized a forum, *Getting from Ideas to Action*, in response to questions raised during the initial public meetings about how other communities were dealing with growth issues. The day-long workshop, which featured speakers from other communities in the region who had taken collective action on growth management, was well-attended (50 people) by community residents.

Although the project team had personally invited all of current county commissioners and candidates to the workshop, two came late to the event and two more just in time to speak in a short panel discussion at the end of the day; four others were absent. During the panel discussion, these commissioners and candidates (with one exception) denied the need for any collective action to protect the county's landscape. Their laissez-faire stance was then attacked by a workshop attendee representing of one of the largest development companies working in Macon County. Solon asserted that land use planning would not discourage development in the county, but would instead attract more scrupulous developers, thereby actually increasing property values. He accused the County Commission of selling out their own heritage. Similar sentiments were expressed by high-end developers on multiple occasions over the course of the LTP project--in the surreal planning discourse of Macon County, elected officials are berated by developers for refusing to regulate them.

The *Ideas to Action* forum was unable to recapture the energy of the LTP project; rhetoric surrounding land use planning became ever more confrontational and uninformed, as evidenced by the Subdivision Control Ordinance described in Section 5.1. Our community partner Stacy Guffey reported that at a later forum sponsored by the property rights group, all of the candidates in the 2006 election for County Commission expressed their opposition to planning regulations.

A year after the conclusion of the LTP public meetings, then, the project team was feeling frustrated by the policymakers' resistance to heeding the citizen input gathered through the project. Opponents of collective resource management action had been able to dismiss LTP's findings as reflecting the views of an unrepresentative minority in the

community: "the kind of people who go to meetings." The "silent majority" still opposed land use planning, they claimed. In order to counter this argument, the team decided to poll that "silent majority" through a random sample survey, which is discussed further in subsequent sections.

Despite encountering obstacles in Macon County, LTP has attracted considerable interest in other Mountain communities. Groups in seven other counties—Buncombe, Clay, Henderson, Jackson, Madison, Mitchell, and Yancey—have expressed interest in undertaking similar projects, and some of these efforts are now underway. As of 2007, the *Mountain Landscape Initiative*—a regional project aimed at addressing landscape change—is being developed with LTP's participatory framework as a model. The initiative, sponsored by the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, will employ participatory methodologies from LTP toward the development of regionally-relevant planning tools.

5.2.7. Reflecting on community project outcomes: determinants of capacity-building success

Reviewing the aftermath of the POL/LTP community projects makes it clear that the discursive rearticulations introduced by the project teams did not precipitate profound, immediate reframing of landscape change issues or decisive increases in communities' natural resource management capacity. Indeed, expecting such an outcome would have been unrealistic and inappropriate. However, community partners' testimony makes it equally clear that this kind of discursive intervention can affect land-use outcomes: 2800 acres of permanently protected land in western Rowan County, plus 1000 more that remain thus far undeveloped in Stanley Creek, are concrete testament to

this influence. Less tangible but also significant are the effects on policymaking—e.g. the planning ordinances passed and proposed in Macon County since 2005—and community social networks that the projects helped to bring about.

Equally striking are the outcomes that never happened: collective actions that seemed possible at the conclusion of the public meetings but were never realized, such as the launch of a citizens' campaign in Macon County or the formation of a community association in Stanley Creek. No new ongoing spaces were created for civic dialogue and action on landscape change; collective action in all the project communities remains ad hoc and reactive. These failures reflect the single greatest shortcoming in the POL/LTP project designs, one that was reiterated by partners in every community: the lack of a follow-up strategy for channeling the collective energy from the participatory research process into collective action. My community partners and I have primarily attributed this shortcoming to the exploratory nature of the research: neither they nor I knew what would come out of the projects. We all harbored hopes that our interventions would advance collective resource management, but we did not want to be disappointed if these hopes proved unfounded (see Section 2.4). Therefore, when the projects did exhibit potential to catalyze systemic change, we were unprepared to respond. In other words, we initially regarded the projects as inquiries into the potential of discursive, ethnographic research to enable community-based natural resource management. When we found out that the research did indeed have this potential, we wanted to capitalize on it—but by then it was almost too late.

In retrospect, I see this misunderstanding as reflecting unresolved ambiguities in our conceptions of *research* and *documentary*. Even when employed in a CBNRM

context, these terms still connote activities that are separate from the actual work of CBNRM: the "knowledge" created through research or the "document" created through documentary work might be useful tools in a CBNRM campaign, but they themselves are not part of that campaign. This distinction was reinforced by Norwood's and my status as academics, whose mandate to conduct research has traditionally been seen as inconsistent with an activist stance. Such a separation does not recognize that the research process is itself an intervention that can effect natural resource management, as described above. Only after the fact did we clearly understand that our interventions represented not only participatory research to identify resources for CBNRM, but CBNRM itself.

If research along the lines of IPRM is recognized from the outset as representing a CBNRM initiative in its own right, then the project team can map out their objectives for the entire initiative from the beginning and commit to seeing it through. Rather than being seen as an endpoint, the public meetings might be seen as a midpoint: an opportunity to identify core community values that will then be used to motivate a desired collective action. The project would not be complete until this collective action was accomplished.

Given the shared strengths and deficiencies of their research design, why did some of the community projects appear to foster more capacity-building than others? To examine this, we must bear in mind that the capacity-building effects of the projects reflects *change* in community capacity, rather than the absolute amount of capacity in a community. As illustrated below, a community that started out with minimal capacity and ended up with a little capacity may have experienced more capacity-building than a

community that already had a significant amount of capacity but did not significantly add to it.

In my estimation, the most significant factor influencing outcomes was the way in which community partners used the projects. Consider the cases of Western Rowan and Stanley Creek, the two sites in which the project most clearly contributed to community conservation victories. Both Adele Goodman and Joyce Burt were leaders without platforms: they were already motivated to lead their fellow community members in protecting the local landscape, but they did not yet have a platform from which they could assume leadership. The POL projects in their communities provided such a platform. Taking leadership on the community projects was empowering for them, and they gained the confidence and recognition to become effective community advocates. In representing their communities, moreover, they were filling a niche that had not previously existed: neither Western Rowan nor Stanley Creek had previously been organized into a distinct constituency.

POL/LTP did not so clearly build capacity in the other communities because, in a sense, more capacity already existed there. Unlike Goodman and Burt, my community partners in Eastern Catawba, Macon County, and the Uwharries already had ways of affecting local landscape change. While these partners saw the POL projects as complementary to their own efforts, they did not "need" them in the same way: they already had their platforms. By the same token, they had neither the time nor the inclination to initiate new forms of collective action that addressed emergent narratives from the projects. These partners were effectively "too" empowered to make use of the POL/LTP projects as an empowerment tool. It seems, then, that capacity-building was

actually more readily achievable in the communities where, by some measures, it was initially lowest. Figuring out how to further increase capacity in communities where some capacity already exists requires further methodological refinement.

Not all variation in POL/LTP project outcomes can be attributed to differences in community partners' capacity-building needs, however; institutional resistance to a given collective action can also play a decisive role, as illustrated by the case of Macon County. In designing LTP, the project team had modified the original POL approach in order to be more result-oriented: we had a clearly-articulated desire to affect the way resource management decisions were being made in the county. However, as discussed previously, LTP was also addressing a more controversial form of resource management: land use policy, as opposed to private land conservation. The project's findings were consequently more threatening to local policymakers, some of whom used their positions to resist and stymie collective action.

Ultimately, it is impossible to definitively establish the extent to which POL/LTP altered the course of events in the communities where the projects were undertaken. Any of the capacity-building that took place could have happened anyway. My community partners are committed local activists who would doubtless have been working to address landscape change with or without this research project; indeed it would be egotistical to suggest that the POL/LTP interventions enabled them to do anything that they could not have otherwise done. Since it is impossible to compare what actually occurred with a "control" history in which there was no intervention, we cannot measure the divergence between the two. However, based on community partners' testimony, we can assert with reasonable confidence that the community projects did affect the land-use decision-

making of various individuals and institutions. Moreover, the record suggests that the projects' impacts reflected not just the structure of the interventions—e.g. interviews and public meetings—but also the discursive content of those interventions—the emergent narratives that were identified. In the project aftermath, then, we can perceive ecological effects of discursive practices.

5.3. Evaluating potential relevance of POL/LTP narratives

The foregoing review of POL/LTP community project aftermath addressed the first of the two guiding evaluation questions: *were the narratives identified through the POL/LTP community projects relevant enough to help build collective natural resource management capacity in the communities where they took place?* The findings suggested that capacity-building did take place to varying degrees. The next stage of evaluation, described below, addresses the second question: *are the identified narratives relevant not only to past project participants but also to non-participants, thus demonstrating potential to support broader community engagement in future natural resource management initiatives?* Assessing emergent project narratives' relevance to non-participants provides an indication of those narratives' usefulness in motivating broader community engagement in future natural resource management initiatives. Rather than examining the capacity building that was *realized* as a result of the community interventions, then, this question seeks to understand the extent of their capacity-building *potential* for future outreach or campaigns, and in so doing evaluate IPRM's potential as a CBNRM tool.

To gauge this potential, I divided the second evaluation question into the two subsidiary questions that were introduced in Section 5.1: 1) *Are the emergent ecological narratives that were identified through a given community project resonant among local residents who did not participate in that project?* and 2) *How does the resonance of project narratives vary across the communities?* If the first question were answered in the affirmative, it would suggest that the IPRM process is capable of identifying narratives that are broadly resonant in a community, not just among the individuals who chose to participate in a community project. The second question would address the scaling of project narratives' relevance by measuring whether narratives from a given community project are especially resonant in the community where the project took place or equally relevant in other communities. Such comparison across communities would also shed light on discursive patterning at regional and inter-regional scales. Together, the answers to these questions would test IPRM's ability to identify persuasive rhetorical resources for collective action.

In order to complete this phase of the evaluation, I needed to reach residents of the five community project sites who had not previously participated in the projects. In doing this, my community partners and I agreed that I would undertake these evaluative investigations on my own. Though the partners provided guidance on developing the evaluation tools, they did not directly participate in conducting the evaluations. This decision was made in order to intentionally step outside the partners' social circles and remove their influence on community members' feedback. We wanted to find out how community members reacted to the research when their responses were not colored by their perceptions of the community partners' agendas. This strategy shows that, within a

participatory research context, partners and researchers may sometimes find it expedient to take a less participatory approach.

The evaluation was conducted during 2006-07 using two instruments: focus groups, which were conducted in all five communities, and a sample survey, which was only conducted in Macon County. The former enabled comparison across the communities, while the latter offered more definitive insights into the local representativity of the LTP project. I had originally considered conducting both focus groups and surveys in all five communities, but in the course of preparing the evaluations I realized that this plan was unrealistic for several reasons. First, only LTP had a clearly bounded population to sample: the population of Macon County. The POL project sites corresponded to more organic definitions of "community," and it was therefore unclear how to survey only the appropriate population. Second, since the POL community projects had been conducted longer ago than LTP, I was not confident that the issues raised in those projects would still be framed appropriately. After all, as discussed previously, my POL community partners now mostly regard the project documents as holding primarily archival interest, since local landscapes have changed so much in the past three years. Third, I came to the important realization that conducting a thoroughgoing survey in five communities would exceed my research budget. At the time of this writing, the survey in Macon County alone has cost an estimated $11,000.

5.3.1. Focus group methodology

In order to recruit focus group participants, I advertised through flyers and newspaper ads in each project site. Twenty-five dollars was offered for participation in the focus groups. Individuals who responded were pre-screened to ensure that they lived

in the target area and had not participated in POL/LTP. The focus groups, which lasted two hours, were scheduled on a weekday evening or weekend afternoon and were held at a venue in each community. Each focus group included four to seven participants, plus a facilitator (me) and a recorder (Norwood). I held two focus groups in Macon County and eastern Catawba County, and one in each other community. The dual focus groups in Eastern Catawba enabled me to conduct separate groups with African-American and white participants, in order to study the effect of ethnicity on responses.

At the beginning of each focus groups, participants signed a consent form that guaranteed the anonymity of her responses. Then I led the group through a series of exercises designed to study their reactions to narratives and values articulated by community project participants. For each exercise, the participants would begin by answering questions in individual workbooks. We would then discuss those questions as a group before proceeding to the next exercise. This approach enabled me to gauge both individual- and group-level reactions to various prompts. Certain exercises were used in all the focus groups, in order to facilitate comparison across communities. Other exercises were specific to each community, in order to test the resonance of particular local narratives. The specific exercises are introduced in the results sections below. Participant perspectives were captured through the completed workbooks, video- and audio-recording, and the recorder's typed notes.

5.3.2. Survey methodology

The survey instrument consisted of a mail questionnaire, which Norwood and I developed together with our LTP community partners. Questions were designed to serve the partners' interest by measuring popular support for a range of resource management

actions, as well as addressing Norwood's and my respective research questions. The project team's initial draft questionnaire was refined through *cognitive interviewing* (Willis 2005): the questionnaire was administered to three community members, who were then asked to explain the decision-making strategies they used to answer each question. This technique enabled us to identify and correct ambiguities in wording and other barriers to respondent comprehension. A revised questionnaire was then pre-tested through administration to a convenience sample of 40 Macon residents, which helped us to perceive and correct biases in the design (Dillman 2007).

The questionnaire was designed to emphasize the local specificity of the study: entitled *2007 Macon County Opinion Survey on Land Use and Growth*, it included imagery and questions that were particular to the county (Figure 5.2). We hoped to boost our response rate by conveying that this was not a generic study, but one that was highly relevant to community members' lives and reflected the local knowledge of the researchers. However, on the recommendation of our community partners we did not associate the survey with any local agency or organization; rather, we packaged it as a project of UNC-Chapel Hill. Community partners felt that the survey would be perceived as more trustworthy and less biased if it was affiliated with the university instead of a local entity.

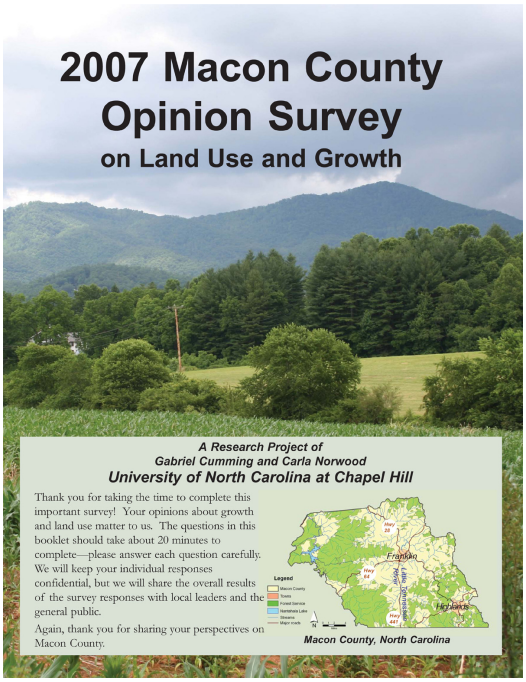


Figure 5.2. The cover of the questionnaire.

We mailed the survey to a random sample of 1800 permanent Macon County residents. Addresses were drawn from a random list of full-time postal delivery addresses, including post office boxes, purchased from a mailing list service recommended by staff at the UNC Odum Institute for Social Science Research. In order to test one of Norwood's research questions concerning the effect of landscape change information on attitudes, the sample was split in two: odd-numbered questionnaires were twelve pages long, including a four-page section with questions about landscape change information, while even-numbered questionnaires did not include this section.

Administration of the survey was based on the Dillman Tailored Design Method (Dillman 2007). Each address was assigned a number between 11000 and 12799, which was handwritten on the back page of the questionnaire and used to track response rate and plan follow-up activities. The questionnaire, along with a cover letter, a dollar bill, and a stamped return envelope, was mailed to all the addresses on the sample list. In

order to emphasis the personal and significant nature of the communication, the envelopes were hand-addressed and the cover letters were hand-signed by both Norwood and myself. This initial mailing was followed one week later by a reminder postcard. Two weeks after the postcard mailing, those who had not yet responded received another copy of the questionnaire, accompanied by a second hand-signed cover letter and stamped return envelope. Recipients whose telephone numbers we had (approximately 40%) received a follow-up call asking them to return their questionnaire. Those who had not responded after another two weeks received a final, hand-written but photocopied reminder postcard.

5.4. Evaluation participants

Table 5.1 summarizes the demographics of the focus group participants. Participants were mostly middle-aged or older and mostly locals, with the exception of Macon. On average, they had complete two years of higher education. The Eastern Catawba participants included seven whites and four African-Americans, who were separated into different groups. The small number of participants from Stanley Creek reflects the difficulty of recruiting participants from such a small geographic area.

	Stanley Creek	Eastern Catawba	Western Rowan	Uwharries	Macon	**Overall**
Participants (n)	4	11	6	7	9	**37**
Age						
Range	36-61	44-74	53-79	49-84	21-67	**21-84**
Average	47.75	59.5	63.17	66.57	42.44	**55.71**
Gender (%)						
Female	50	54.55	50	14.29	44.44	**43.24**
Male	50	45.45	50	85.71	55.56	**56.76**
Education level ***(average years completed)***	14	14.38	15.33	13	14	**14.12**
Local/outsider (%)*						
Local	100	81.82	83.33	85.71	33.3	**73.97**
Outsider	0	18.18	16.67	14.29	66.7	**27.03**

Table 5.1. Demographics of focus group participants

The *Macon County Opinion Survey* was returned by 847 individuals (47%), with 803 providing usable responses, for an effective response rate of 46%.[38] Respondent demographics are summarized in Table 5.2. A majority of respondents were over 60 years ago, which attests to the predominance of senior citizens in the county. Retirees may also have been more likely to complete and return the questionnaires. Women and locals represented slight majorities in the respondent population. Seventy-one percent had completed at least some college, and most were landowners.

[38] As of May 10, 2007, 48.6% of delivered questionnaires had been returned, with a usable return rate of 46%. This represents 44.6% of all the questionnaires mailed, some of which were undeliverable. As of this writing, a small number of questionnaires are still being returned.

Age	
Under 25	1.3
25-39	12.6
40-59	34.7
60-79	44.7
80+	6.8
Gender	
Female	52.9
Male	47.1
Education level	
Did not complete high school	7.1
High school/GED	21.7
Some college	29.9
College graduate	25.3
More than college	16.0
Local/outsider*	
Local	51.7
Outsider	48.4
Landowner	
Yes	84.1
No	15.9

Table 5.2. Demographics of *Macon County Opinion Survey* respondents, expressed as percentages. * Respondents who indicated that they are the first generation of their family to live in Macon County were classified as "outsiders;" those whose families had lived in the county for two or more generations were classified as "locals."

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how many generations of their families had lived in Macon County: one, two, or three or more. Responses are graphed in Figure 5.3 below.

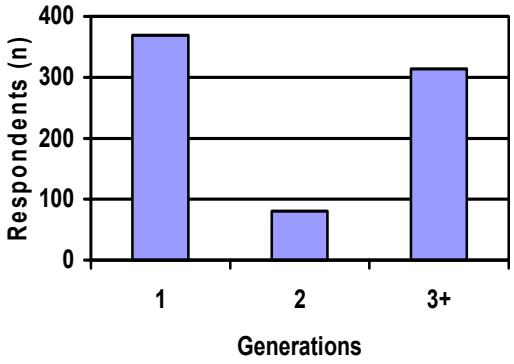


Figure 5.3. Number of generations that survey respondents' families have lived in Macon County.

Large numbers of respondents were the first in their families to live in the county, while many others were descended from families that have lived there for at least three generations. Relatively few families have been there for two generations. This bimodal distribution is an illuminating testament to the demographic split in present-day Macon County: it suggests that most people are either members of long-time local families or recently-arrived outsiders. They are representatives of the two major Euro-American in-migrations to the area: the original Scotch-Irish settlement in the nineteenth century and the current amenity-driven growth.

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate their familiarity with the *Little Tennessee Perspectives* project that we had previously conducted in Macon County. This provided a means for us to track how widespread the effects of our discursive intervention had been. The results are summarized in Table 5.3 below.

Have heard of LTP	
Yes	32.5
No	67.5
How did you hear about it*	
Media	83.5
Word of mouth	33.3
Participated: interviewee	1.9
Participated: meetings	7.3
Other	5.0

Table 5.3. Percentage of respondents who had heard of the *Little Tennessee Perspectives*, and how they had heard about it. * Percentages of respondents who answered "yes" to the previous query (not percentages of the total respondent pool).

Familiarity with LTP was greater than I expected: nearly one third of the respondents indicated that they had at least heard of it. Not surprisingly, most of them had found out about the project through the media. Seven percent of the respondents had directly participated in the project by attending on of the public meetings, while 5 reported that they had been interviewed for the project, which we expect is an overestimate. All of these figures, of course, are subject to the vagaries of respondents' recollections: some respondents may have once been familiar with the project but have forgotten its name, while others may have been confusing the project with something else. Assuming a reasonable degree of accuracy, however, these responses show how widely the effects of a discursive intervention like LTP can be dispersed through a community. After all, the proportion of community members who recognize the project by name is almost certainly considerably lower than the proportion who has felt its effects indirectly.

5.5. Results I: Support for emergent project narratives

In this section, I present evaluation results that address whether the emergent ecological narratives that were identified through a given community project resonate among local residents who did not participate in that project. To explore this question, I measured focus group and survey responses to narratives or values that were particularly prevalent in or distinctive to project discourse from the same community.

To measure support for project narratives, focus group participants and survey respondents were asked to evaluate discourse segments from the community projects, which were presented in the voice of the original speaker. Focus group participants listened to an audio recording of the statement, which was also transcribed in their workbooks. Then they answered questions about the statements. Survey respondents rated their support for transcribed discourse segments, as well as other value statements. The results from each community are presented below.

5.5.1. Stanley Creek

Stanley Creek community project participants had identified particularly strongly with a heritage/genealogical connection to place, and they had mostly expressed a desire for development in the community to be curtailed in order to protect that heritage. In the Stanley Creek focus group, I sought to ascertain whether focus group participants shared this enthusiasm for the narrative string *H#/genealogical*. The participants were asked to complete the following two exercises.

> **II. Reasons why people like the Stanley Creek area**
>
> A. All the neighbors that are here are very respectful of each other. They maintain their homes nicely and their surrounding yards or fields and it's just very pleasant. It's pleasing to look at, it's pleasing because it's quiet.

B. I have an immediate connection with natural world out here, concentrated or focused in the knowledge that it's been in my family an awful long time.

Which statement is closer to your own perspective?
_____ Statement A
_____ Statement B
_____ Neither

Which statement better represents the views of people who live in this community?
_____ Statement A
_____ Statement B
_____ Neither

III. Attitudes toward development in this area

A. I'd like to see it kept as near like it is as possible.

B. People got to live somewhere, as long as they don't devastate the land too much.

Which statement do you agree with more?
_____ Statement A
_____ Statement B
_____ Neither

Which statement do you think most people in the Stanley Creek area would agree with?
_____ Statement A
_____ Statement B
_____ Neither

In each case, an audio recording of a pair of discourse segments was played. Focus group participants then had to determine which statement better approximated their own attitude and that of the community as a whole. The first pair of statements represents a distinction between an *affinity* and *heritage* orientation, and the second pair represents a distinction between a *collective* and *individual* coda. *Heritage*, in this case, also represents *genealogical* narrative. In Table 5.4, their responses are compared to the proportional usage of each functional narrative type in the original project data.

	Project	*Focus Group: Personal*	*Focus Group: Community*
Orientation			
Affinity	34.78	100.00	25.00
Heritage	65.22	0	75.00
Neither	n/a	0	0
Coda			
Collective	85.71	100.00	75.00
Individual	14.29	0	25.00
Neither	n/a	0	0

Table 5.4. Percentage support for different orientation and coda perspectives in Stanley Creek community project discourse and focus group responses.

Focus group participants' estimations of community attitudes closely reflect the proportions from the community project—more closely than their own attitudes. This discrepancy is particularly striking in the choice between a *heritage* and *affinity* perspective: all of the focus group participants felt more personally aligned with *affinity*, but they mostly felt that their fellow community members would favor *heritage*. The former result is surprising, since all of the focus group participants were themselves locals. In their daily lives, it seems, the focus group participants experienced the *affinity* values of Stanley Creek more than the *heritage* values; however, they acknowledged the importance of *heritage* to the community at large. In terms of coda, they were all opposed to further growth, but they felt that some community members were more pro-development.

These mixed results suggest that the Stanley Creek community project was able to capture narratives with broad local appeal, but perhaps not in accurate proportions. The preponderance of local elders in the project may have resulted in an overemphasis of *heritage* as opposed to *affinity*. As for codas, opposing growth decisively emerges as the more socially acceptable position in the community—if project and focus group

participants do feel the temptation to sell land for development, they are hesitant to admit it publicly.

5.5.2. Eastern Catawba

The discourse of the Eastern Catawba community project was more multifaceted than that of Stanley Creek, so measuring its resonance called for a multilateral approach. Through a series of three exercises, I measured the strength of a *heritage* perspective, explored attitudes toward change, and gauged responses to an exemplar of *justice* narrative.

To measure the resonance of *heritage*, I took a different approach than I used in the other communities. Rather than asking focus group participants to respond to a discourse segment, I simply asked them about camp meeting. During my fieldwork in Eastern Catawba, I had found discussion of camp meeting to be a powerful metonym for local heritage, so I wanted to discover how widely the institution's influence extended in the community.

	Overall	***EC1: White***	***EC2: African-American***
I attend camp meeting			
Regularly	45.46	57.14	25.00
Occasionally	54.55	42.86	75.00
Never	0	0	0
Proportion of community that values camp meeting			
Most	63.64	57.14	75.00
Some	42.86	42.86	25.00
Few	0	0	0

Table 5.5. Responses of Eastern Catawba County focus group participants to questions about camp meeting. *EC1* and *EC2* represent the two focus groups; *Overall* represents the aggregated responses of both focus groups. Responses expressed as percentages.

The results of this inquiry (see Table 5.5) support my impressions regarding the importance of camp meeting in this community. All focus group participants reported attending camp meeting, and 45 percent indicated that they attend "regularly." They also tended to believe that "most" area residents value camp meeting as well.

To measure perceptions of landscape change, I asked the focus group participants to respond to the following assertion by project interviewee Tommy Stutts: "That's all we're raising now. We don't farm no more; we raise houses instead of crops." Responses to the ensuing questions are summarized in Table 5.6.

	Overall	***EC1: White***	***EC2: African-American***
Is development replacing agriculture?*	3.09	2.85	3.50
Amount of development			
Too much	45.46	57.14	25.00
Right amount	45.46	28.57	75.00
Not enough	0	0	0
Future farm/forest land usage			
A lot	0	0	0
A little	63.64	42.86	100.00
None	54.55	85.71	0

Table 5.6. Responses of Eastern Catawba focus group participants to questions about landscape change. * Average score on a four-point scale (4=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree). Other figures are percentages.

On average, participants somewhat agreed that development was replacing an agricultural land uses in the area, which is consistent with project participants' recognition that changes were taking place in their community.[39] White participants

[39] Change (*y*) was invoked in 29.31% of discourse segments, while continuity (*n*) was never invoked.

tended to agree with Stutts' statement less strongly than African-American participants, which may reflect the fact that some of the white participants are involved in agricultural pursuits and intend to remain so. However, most white participants thought that agriculture would eventually disappear from the landscape altogether, while all of the African-American participants thought that "a little" agriculture would remain.

The greater optimism of the African-American focus group also came across in characterizations of the amount of development taking place: 75% of that group believed that the "right amount" of development was happening, while a majority of the white focus group thought there was "too much" development. Even though they saw development as largely replacing agriculture, the African-American participants largely evinced a "progressive" view that development would bring benefits to the community. The white focus group participants, by contrast, mostly regarded development in negative terms, affirming the association of change with loss that was prevalent in the community project.[40] The perspective that the "right amount" of development is taking place also suggests a lack of perceived need for collective action; if change is already proceeding at the appropriate pace, then the community need not intervene to accelerate or decelerate it. This laissez-faire view was absent from the community project.[41]

I wanted to measure reactions to *justice* narrative because this thematic narrative type was so much more frequently invoked in Eastern Catawba than in other communities, and because it was invoked exclusively by minority interlocutors. I thought that it would be an interesting way to test differences among white and African-

[40] Project participants described change as causing loss (*L)* in 20.69% of discourse segments. Change was seen as causing gain (*G*) in 3.45% of discourse segments.

[41] A collective coda (#) was featured in 22.41% of discourse segments from the community project; an individual coda (*) was featured in none.

American perspectives. To study the resonance of this narrative type, I asked them to consider the following passage from Spencer Graham's interview (previously discussed in Chapter 3; see Table 3.11):

> Everybody wants to know where the homeplace was at. You know, when Lake Norman came through here, it took a bunch of the good land under water, and everybody still—they may stay gone five, six, ten years—but they all still want to know if that's where the old homeplace used to be at. And that's the thing I think it always will be.
>
> You know money is the root of all evil anyway, you know. And they thought, you know, well a lot of people had the idea that, thought they were going to get-rich-quick deals on land and stuff, you know, and Duke Power come through and you know, give them a couple of dollars an acre for land and knowed all the time what was going on, you know, and that's what happened [with that generation.]

I hypothesized that African-American focus group participants would more strongly agree with the *justice* concerns raised by Graham, who is also African-American. To my surprise, however, the opposite turned out to be true (see Table 5.7).

	Overall	***EC1: White***	***EC2: African-American***
Agree	3.09	3.43	2.50
Support justice narrative	2.91	3.14	2.50

Table 5.7. Responses of Eastern Catawba focus group participants to a *justice* narrative about the creation of Lake Norman. Figures are average scores on a four-point scale (4=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree).

I asked the participants to rate their agreement with the statement and also with a more general question measuring perceptions of *justice*: "As this area has developed, do you think that some people have profited unfairly at the expense of other people?" In both cases, white participants agreed more strongly than African-American participants (on average, the participants as a whole "somewhat agreed" on both items).

Responses to Graham's statement and the foregoing question about development suggest that African-American community members are generally less concerned about change at a landscape scale. Participants in the African-American focus group did not so much express enthusiasm about landscape changes that were taking place as indicate that they had never given the matter much thought. In order to object to development, one must first perceive "development" as an aggregate phenomenon and feel empowered to object to it.

When working in other African-American communities, I have noticed a similar apparent lack of concern about landscape-scale change—a lack of concern that seems to be rooted not in naïve optimism but in a profound sense of disempowerment regarding the fate of landscapes. In other words, affecting the course of development in a landscape seems so far beyond the realm of possibility that it is not even worth worrying about. This attitude is understandable when one considers the degree to which African-Americans historically have had to work on other people's land or have lost their own property.[42] I see this legacy of servitude, hard labor, disenfranchisement, and expropriation as underlying present-day African-Americans' tendency to speak of place in social, rather than geospatial terms: unlike the physical landscape, the social landscape was one in which they could find agency and refuge.

Rural whites, such as those in the other Eastern Catawba focus group, generally voice quite a bit of concern about landscape change: they feel empowered as stakeholders

[42] According the Census of Agriculture, African-American farmers owned 16-19 million acres in 1910 and only 1.5 million acres as of 1997, representing a 91-92% loss. USDA's Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey of 1999 reported that African-American *agricultural land owners* (a more inclusive category than *farmers*) actually owned 7.8 million acres. Whichever figure is used, however, it is undeniable that African-American land ownership decreased drastically during the last century, a time period in which the farmland acreage owned by whites increased (Gilbert, Wood, and Sharp 2002).

in the landscape. While this empowerment can lead to greater support for collective natural resource management action, it can also lead to the opposite position: staunch defense of individual property rights. In other words, the security with which whites regard their property claims can engender either support for collective action to protect valued property attributes or support for absolute individual sovereignty over property. African Americans have largely been less engaged in this "planning versus property rights" debate, though recent initiatives aimed at fostering black land ownership represent attempts to correct this.[43]

Race is not the only factor in the differences between the responses of the two focus groups, however: landscape change itself is another. Most of the white focus group participants live on or near Lake Norman, whereas the African-American interviewees mostly live further west, toward Newton (see area map, Figure 3.7). The lake area is experiencing explosive growth, emanating from nearby Mooresville. The interior of the county is also growing, but not to the same degree. Difference in attitudes toward development, then, may partly reflect the amount of development that is actually taking place in an individual's immediate vicinity: an interior resident is more likely to believe that the "right amount" of development is occurring, while a lake resident is more likely to feel that there is "too much." This geographical distinction also appeared to affect perceptions of Lake Norman's creation: a number of the participants in focus group EC1 (white) had directly experienced the expropriation of land that proceeded the

[43] In North Carolina, efforts to assert black land sovereignty have been spearheaded by such organizations as the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association, Concerned Citizens of Tillery, Land Loss Prevention Project, Resourceful Communities (a Conservation Fund program), and Sandhills Family Heritage Association.

impoundment of the reservoir, whereas the participants in EC2 (African-American) had not been directly affected by the lake's creation and were less familiar with the issue.

Attitudes can vary, then, across land use gradients even within one section of a county. This demonstrates how localized ecological narratives can be: individuals' perceptions of landscape change may only take into account their immediate lived experience. Such local specificity helps to explain why community members tend not express concern about development until they are already surrounded by then: until then, the threat does not seem real enough.

Considered as a whole, the responses of Eastern Catawba focus group participants mostly affirmed narratives from the community project. In two respects, however, I failed to predict participant attitudes based on community project data: the degree of satisfaction with the amount of development and the lack of African-American support for the *justice* narrative exemplar. These results suggest that the Eastern Catawba community project had provided a generally accurate but partial view of community ecological discourse in the community.

5.5.3. Western Rowan

In Western Rowan, as in Stanley Creek, I used the focus group to measure community members' relative support for *affinity* versus *heritage* and *collective* versus *individual* perspectives. To test the former pair, I asked participants to choose between the following statements:

1. That ground is the most beautiful land in the world.
2. It's the backbone of the community, the land is.

The first statement, spoken by an outsider, expresses *affinity* for place on aesthetic grounds. The second statement, spoken by a local, ties the importance of land to the network of social ties that it sustains—a viewpoint more associated with *heritage*.

Individual and *collective* perspectives, respectively, were represented by the following two statements:

1. Land is one of their biggest assets, because if it'll grow corn it'll grow condos. You can plant either one of them.

2. We want the protection. Us people-- we that love our land, we don't care how much it's worth because none of us want to sell it. We're locked up here.

The first statement places land use decisions squarely in the hands of the individual landowners, who is portrayed as a "rational economic actor." The second statement, by contrast, proclaims a collective value that trumps individual self-interest.

After hearing each pair of statements, the participants were instructed to indicate which statement they personally agreed with more, and which statement they thought would garner most support in the community at large. Responses appear in Table 5.6 below.

	Project	***Focus Group: Personal***	***Focus Group: Community***
Orientation			
Affinity	75.97	50.00	33.33
Heritage	24.00	50.00	50.00
Neither	n/a	0	16.67
Coda			
Collective	92.69	83.33	66.67
Individual	7.31	16.67	33.33
Neither	n/a	0	0

Table 5.8. Percentage support for different orientation and coda perspectives in Western Rowan community project discourse and focus group responses.

Focus group participants indicated more support for a *heritage* perspective, and correspondingly less for *affinity*, than did project participants. I see this difference as reflecting the preponderance of professional farmers in the project, as opposed to the focus group. As discussed in Section 3.4.3, Western Rowan farmers tended to valuate their land based on *affinity*—particularly in terms of economic productivity. None of the focus group participants were professional farmers, however. Their connection to place, like locals in other project communities, depended more on *heritage*.

The focus group participants mostly echoed project participants' support for collective over individual approaches to addressing landscape change. They tended to have less faith in the community's commitment to protecting the landscape, however: they estimated that their fellow community members' connection to place was weaker, and individualism stronger, than their own. As in Stanley Creek, I suspect that participants tended to project onto the "community" aspects of their own psyche that they deemed less "desirable" within the focus group context. In other words, they tended to play up their own conservationist tendencies while downplaying economic self-interest.

The Western Rowan focus group qualitatively affirmed the resonance of narratives from the community project; however, in terms of orientation, quantitative affirmation was not received. I would expect to find that the focus group's perspectives are more representative of the community at large than those of project participants. Most of the local population, including the farmers, probably feels a *heritage* connection to place; this sense of *heritage* was simply overshadowed in the project by the *affinity* discourse of modern farming.

5.5.4. Uwharries

Uwharries focus group participants' perspectives were measured through their responses to locally-salient land use issues that had been identified through the preceding community project. First they listened to the following interview excerpt:

> Everybody's got their pros and cons about the government land. Some people like it and some people don't. Mostly the only thing I got against the government land is opening it up to deer hunters come in here. And you know the government land joins other people's land—a lot of times they think they own that too. I've had them try to run me off my own land, you know. That has caused more hurt feelings in this country than anything else: deer hunters.
>
> I can remember the time when you could take off here and go nearly to Uwharrie squirrel hunting. Walk across anybody's land you wanted; nobody never said a word to you. You won't get to the county line now before somebody stop you.

That passage was used as a prompt for discussion of the effects that the Uwharrie National Forest and outside recreation enthusiasts are having on the community. Then participants were asked to rank the following three visions for the Uwharrie landscape's future, as expressed by community project participants:

1. I think we, we need to put more emphasis on getting industry in here. And not just sawmills and lumber and textile—the industry that, like the Research Triangle has, that's high tech. We could use this land and have a business park and so forth, and the rest of the county wouldn't change much, except the people moving in would- maybe then we would have something other than a Food Lion. We'd have a drug store; possibly we might even have an Applebee's or a lot of things.

2. I guess the most hopeful thing that I see is that we can preserve big tracts of land to supplement what's there for the National Forest, and that it really will become a place that people use as recreation. And that there are businesses that come up, that people have bed and breakfast type things, that people then have restaurants or coffee shops.

3. I'd like to see it stay about the same, you know—not to be developed any more.

Their responses are summarized in Table 5.9.

Incursion of outside hunters onto private lands*	3.14
Enclosure of informal commons*	3.71
National Forest benefit or problem for community?**	
Benefit	71.43
Problem	0
Both equally	28.57
Neither	0
Visions for the future, ranked***	
Recreation/conservation	1 (1.71)
Stay the same	2 (1.86)
Industry	3 (2.57)

Table 5.9. Uwharrie focus group participants' responses to questions about landscape control and change. * Average scores on a four-point scale (4=strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree). ** Percentages. *** Overall rank (average rank).

In responding to the initial passage about the incursions of hunters from the National Forest, the focus group somewhat agreed that such incursions are a problem. They strongly agreed that community members are less likely to let people walk or hunt across their property than they formerly were—thereby affirming the community project narrative regarding the closure of the informal, forested commons (see Table 3.17). Despite these concerns, however, participants mostly saw the Uwharrie National Forest as a net benefit to the area. Taken together, these responses reflect a recognition that the influx of outsiders has been economically valuable but has also taken a toll on their community's social capital.

This ambivalence toward change is also manifest in participants' rankings of the three visions for the future. Overall, they favored the vision of economic advancement through recreation and conservation, followed closely by the desire to see no change at all. The vision of industrial/commercial development was the least popular. Support for conservation can be seen as consistent with the negative view of change and support for

collective natural resource management that were evinced by community project participants.[44]

However, determining whether community members see a given course of action as representing continuity or change is not always straightforward. As I observed in Section 4.5.1, *a new way of managing an old resource is still new*. Bearing this in mind, we can better differentiate the kinds of change and continuity reflected by the three visions above. Vision Three reflects a simple preference for *old* over *new*. Vision One, meanwhile, suggests an *old* way of introducing *new* land uses. In other words, the speaker is advocating for landscape change through economic development, but his approach to development is a traditional one: he sees high-tech industry simply filling the niche that was formerly occupied by other industries, such as timber and textiles. By contrast, Vision Two advocates a *new* way of maintaining *old* land uses, through conservation of natural resources and rural character. Though its goal would be ensuring the continuity of the rural landscape, this is nonetheless a new framing of economic development: one in which development is based on a community's existing assets, rather than on the recruitment of industrial capital. The success of this strategy depends on attracting a different kind of external capital: tourist dollars. As such, Vision Two reveals the paradox facing Uwharries residents: in order to protect what they value about their local environment, they may have to throw that environment open to outsiders—who, as the hunting issue demonstrates, may not respect local relationships to place. In supporting Vision Two, then, focus group participants were deciding to endorse this *new*

[44] Sixty-six (65.79) percent of community project discourse segments that addressed the results of change described them in terms of loss. Among codas, 82.74% favored collective, rather than individual, responses.

development paradigm despite its costs, because they saw it as the most realistic way to protect some of the *old*.

On the whole, the opinions of Uwharrie focus group participants affirmed the representativity of the views captured by the local community project: in both cases, the discourse was rife with tensions between the desire for collective protection of local values and the desire for privacy. Fundamentally, I do not see these competing desires as reflecting different perspectives—they are both inherent to the *heritage* orientation that predominates in this community. Here as in the other project communities, a *heritage* connection to place always seems to involve this same internal conflict between two cherished assets: the integrity of the rural landscape and the (perceived) freedom from outside interference.

5.5.4. Macon

Three data sources—the *Little Tennessee Perspectives* project, the focus groups, and the Macon County Opinion Survey—can be triangulated to evaluate our discursive intervention in Macon County and to provide a more in-depth characterization of the community's discourse. Both evaluative instruments solicited Macon residents' responses to emergent narrative types from the community project discourse, as expressed in the words of the original speakers. In this section, I will compare these responses across all three data sets, and then use the survey data to further interrogate my hypothesized narrative articulations.

To test support for *affinity* and *heritage* perspectives, focus group participants were asked to choose which of the following two statements was closer to their own viewpoint:

1. The mountains are just almost something spiritual to people. People just love the mountains—to see them from a distance or to be in them is something that—if you are a mountain person, you just feel that in the mountains. Like it's your home. It's hard to beat, really. It's hard to find a place that has more to offer if you are drawn to nature and mountain life.

2. This is a tract of land that was settled by my ancestors, and I guess I think I'm seventh generation… and its still all in one tract with the family. And hopefully it stays that way.

A subsequent pairing also contrasted *heritage* and *affinity*, but this time participants were asked which provided a more persuasive argument for land use planning:

1. I don't have a crystal ball, and as an old timer and one who has roots here, I guess people like me would like to see it stay the same. Obviously that's not going to happen. There's going to be change, and what we want to do is plan so that that change will make it at least be as good and maybe better than what we have now.

   But we have a, we've got to do some land planning or something to curtail the growth or regulate the growth so that we still maintain our good clean environment and good way of life that we all enjoy.

2. How do we become more crowded and maintain what they all came here for to begin with? And that can happen again by defining where we want that growth to be, and how we want that growth to happen.

   Of course the other issue is the private rights issue and my right to do what I want. But my rights are restricted by society, and I'm willing to give up some of those rights.

Survey respondents were presented with fourteen transcribed statements, each of which we had selected as an exemplar of an emergent functional narrative type or articulation from LTP (see Table 5.10). They were asked to rate their support for each statement on a five-point scale, ranging from "strongly support" to "strongly oppose."

Statement	***Narrative type(s)***
1. This land was settled by my ancestors, and I'm the seventh generation… and it's still all in one tract with the family. Hopefully it stays that way.	*heritage*
2. We fell in love with the area. That's how we ended up in this part of the country.	*affinity*
3. If people have property and pay their taxes, then I feel like basically they should do what they want to with it.	*individual*
4. You know, it's your home, and your roots are here, and you feel tied to the land. Because of childhood experiences and growing up on it, it becomes part of you.	*heritage*
5. One of the biggest things I like about Macon County is the freedom from the tight [land use] restrictions that I grew up with in the major cities. There is no law against everything that you do around here.	*individual/ affinity*
6. It's hard to find a place that has more to offer if you are drawn to nature and mountain life.	*affinity*
7. People definitely need to think about what it is they really like and value about a place and commit to protecting those few things at all costs.	*collective/ affinity*
8. The biggest thing that we have going in Macon County, as far as the economy, is what's done with real estate and development. We certainly don't want to stop that.	*gain*
9. I feel like we're giving up a lot in Macon County. We're just losing things that we used to not even think about. I think we lose a little bit every day.	*loss*
10. Things change whether you like it or not.	*inevitability*
11. Let Macon County become whatever it will become. I don't want control of it.	*inevitability/ individual*
12. I hope it will develop, but I hope it will be a good place to live...have it so people can stay here and not have to leave to make a living.	*gain*
13. If we don't do something, every one of our mountains is going to be the same. I told my grandson, I said you better go ahead and take some pictures of these mountains right now, while there's not a house on every one of them."	*loss/heritage*
14. As an old timer and one who has roots here, I guess people like me would like to see it stay the same. But we've got to do some land planning or something to curtail the growth or regulate the growth so that we still maintain our good clean environment and good way of life we all enjoy.	*collective/ heritage*

Table 5.10. Concourse of statements from LTP project discourse that were used in the Macon County opinion survey. The functional narrative type or types represented by each statement are listed in the right-hand column. Multiple types are listed if a statement represents a prevalent articulation of multiple narrative elements. In these cases, the "primary" narrative function of the statement is listed first.

Table 5.11, below, summarizes the proportional support for different perspectives among LTP participants, focus group participants, and survey respondents. Though the percentages are not equivalent across the three data sources (survey percentages, unlike those from the project and focus groups, do not sum to 100 percent), relative support for different perspectives can be compared. Given the importance of local versus outsider status in Macon County land use discussions, I have also separated the focus group and survey percentages according whether the respondent was a local or an outsider.

	Project	***Focus Group***			***Survey***		
		Overall	*Local*	*Outsider*	*Overall*	*Local*	*Outsider*
Orientation							
Affinity	50.0	77.8	66.7	83.3	88.4	83.5	93.0
Heritage	50.0	22.2	33.3	16.7	71.4	82.9	60.3
Neither	n/a	0	0	0	4.8	6.1	3.6
Rationale for collective action							
Affinity (A#)	44.8	33.3	0	50.0	88.0	87.8	88.2
Heritage (H#)	55.2	66.7	100.0	50.0	89.7	91.8	87.7
Neither	n/a	0	0	0	3.7	3.0	4.4
Result of change							
Loss	68.9	n/a			81.3	86.5	76.2
Inevitability	24.6				17.5	15.2	19.8
Gain	6.6				53.7	51.0	56.4
None	n/a				4.9	4.0	5.8

Table 5.11. Percentage support for different perspectives among Macon County residents, compared across the LTP project, focus groups, and survey. Project percentages represent the proportional representation of each perspective as a proportion of the total usage of the relevant functional narrative element or articulation (*orientation*, *orientation-coda*, and *result*—see Table 3.2 for reference). Focus group percentages represent the proportion of focus group participants who chose a given exemplar from the two statement pairs introduced above. Perspectives on the results of change were not tested in the focus groups. Survey percentages for each perspective represent the proportion of respondents whose average support for the relevant exemplars ≥ 3.5. Survey percentages in the *neither/none* rows represent the proportion of respondents whose average support for all of the perspectives in a given category < 3.5. Unlike project and focus group percentages, survey percentages do not sum to 100%, because they reflect independent responses.

Comparison of the aggregate response percentages reveals an interesting discrepancy regarding support for an *affinity* or *heritage* perspective: while community

members generally evinced greater support for *affinity* in its own right, they tended to regard *heritage* as a more persuasive rationale for collective action. More people related personally to *affinity*, but they believed that the community as a whole would respond better to *heritage*. The former perspective may now represent a majority of Macon County's citizens, but the latter may be more highly valued in public discussions of resource management issues.

This dynamic, which is consistent with my own fieldwork observations, may well prove critical in determining the success of local capacity-building efforts—it means that, while most of the community support for a CBNRM initiative could now come from an *affinity* perspective, the spokespeople for the initiative still need to convey a *heritage* perspective. A call for collective action that is grounded in a multi-generational, local sense of place has potential to garner high levels of support throughout the community: locals will support the statement because they relate to it, and outsiders will support it because they fetishize the local "authenticity" that it represents. To put it another way, both locals and outsiders at a public hearing would rather hear a local than an outsider speak in favor of a proposed ordinance. A new transplant from Florida who voices support for the ordinance has very little rhetorical power; indeed, their support could even diminish the measure's chances of becoming law. If a respected elder from a multi-generational mountain family voiced support for the ordinance, however, such a statement could have considerable rhetorical power and significantly improve the ordinance's chances. This power is evidenced by survey respondents' support for Statement 14 (see Table 5.10), in which Bill Fouts—who is, in fact, a respected elder from a multi-generational mountain family—identifies himself as "an old timer and one

who has roots here" before calling for "land planning." The average level of support for this statement was higher than for any other: 4.60 on a 5-point scale, meaning that, on *average*, respondents "strongly supported" the speaker's viewpoint.

The crowning irony in Macon County is that individuals with the greatest rhetorical power to advocate for collective natural resource management are generally disinclined to exercise that power. As discussed in Chapter Four, most highly-regarded locals in the community are reticent about voicing their opinions in public forums: such behavior has traditionally been seen as "indecorous" (Cox 2006). Moreover, given the importance that locals ascribe to kinship and social networks, they may not speak out in order to avoid offending their friends or family members. Bill Fouts' behavior illustrates the point. A number of Fouts' statements, including #14 above, were featured in the *Macon County Voices* documentary that was shown at all the LTP public meetings. However, when he and his wife attended one of those public meetings (in Cowee), they stayed quite quiet. Fouts did not speak in the full group, and I noticed that he also spoke little during the small group discussion period. Instead, conversation in his small group was dominated by a few outsiders who carried on at length, unaware that their reticent group-mate might be the most rhetorically powerful speaker in Macon County! I could cite multiple similar cases of locals who eloquently express persuasive views in an interview setting, but will not do so in public.

Public speech that advocates collective action from a *heritage* perspective is so powerful, then, partly because it is so rare. Most locals' public silence on land use issues has left planning debates to be dominated by outsiders—who are largely quite comfortable speaking in public—and the minority of locals who have cast themselves as

"voices of the silent majority." The latter are generally less scrupulous than their fellow locals, since they do not hesitate to make unsubstantiated claims of popular support for their own opinions. They also tend only to rally opposition to proposed measures, rather than suggesting any of their own. As such, they only react to the policy agenda, rather than helping to shape it. The resounding silence of most locals, combined with the verbosity of outsiders and local ideologues, has led many observers to the erroneous conclusion that all outsiders want planning and all locals oppose it. In reality, all of the latent leaders that a CBNRM initiative would ever need are right there in Macon County, but they will not speak for fear of offending. Instead, they leave policy in the hands of those who are willing to offend and watch as the landscape they love fades away.

When the focus group and survey responses of locals and outsiders are separated, the differences in response generally confirm my observations from the community project data: locals respond more favorably than outsiders to expressions of *heritage*, while the reverse is true for *affinity*. As I expected, local survey respondents were more likely to view change as causing *loss*, and less likely to see it a bringing *gain*, than outsiders—though, in absolute terms, both groups regarded change primarily pessimistically. On the other hand, survey respondents' support for a *gain* perspective was higher, and their support for *inevitability* lower, than I expected based on project findings. The survey portrays a community that is somewhat more favorable toward development, but less resigned to fate, than LTP suggested.

In addition to measuring support for different narratives, the survey results enable us to explore the accuracy of the functional narrative typology that I developed through analysis of the community project data and consultation with community partners (see

Table 3.2). In other words, we can explore whether the hypothesized "narratives" actually seem to exist in Macon County's discourse. To do this, I have first examined the correlations among responses to the fourteen exemplar statements. If the hypothesized typology of functional narrative elements is accurate, one would expect to see strong positive correlations among responses to statements that are supposed to represent the same perspective. Conversely, one would expect strong negative correlations between those statements and statements deemed to represent opposing perspectives. The results of this correlation testing are summarized in Table 5.12. Then I have used factor analysis to discern patterns in the overall responses to the concourse of statements. In this way, we can characterize the narrative articulations that emerge from the survey data (see Table 5.13).

	Hypothesized positive correlations		***Hypothesized negative correlations***	
	Supported	*Not supported*	*Supported*	*Not supported*
Affinity				
2	6, 7	5		1, 4, 14
5	6	2, 7	14	1, 4
6	2, 5, 7			1, 4, 14
7	2, 6	5		1, 4, 14
Heritage				
1	4, 14			2, 5, 6, 7
4	1, 14			2, 5, 6, 7
14	1, 4		5	2, 6, 7
Loss				
9	13		8, 10, 11, 12	
13	9		8, 10, 11, 12	
Inevitability				
10	11		9, 13	8, 12
11	10		9, 13	8, 12
Gain				
8	12		9, 13	8, 12
12	8		9, 13	8, 12
Collective				
7	13, 14		11	3, 5
13	7, 14		11	3, 5
14	7, 13		3, 5, 11	
Individual				
3	5, 11		14	7, 13
5	3, 11		14	7, 13
11	3, 5		7, 13, 14	

Table 5.12. Results of testing hypothesized correlations among survey respondents' levels of support for fourteen LTP discourse segments. Numbers in the table represent particular statements (reference Table 5.10). Each row displays the results of testing one statement, whose number is listed in the left-hand column. The other columns display the numbers of statements that I hypothesized to be correlated with the subject statement; their placement indicates whether a positive or negative correlation was hypothesized and whether or not that hypothesis was supported.

To test relationships among respondents' support for the concourse statements, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated using SAS 9.1.3. Multiple imputation

was first used to interpolate responses based on correlations for surveys missing one or two answers to the 14 statement questions (n=30). Therefore, results from 781 respondents were usable in the analysis. I hypothesized that support for each statement would exhibit statistically significant ($p<.05$) positive correlations with statements representing the "same" perspective and statistically significant negative correlations with statements representing "opposing" perspectives.

As Table 5.12 shows, most hypotheses regarding positive correlations were supported (88.89%), while a majority of hypotheses regarding negative correlations were not supported (57.58%). This pattern suggests that the hypothesized perspectival alignments are largely valid, but that respondents do not necessarily see them as being in opposition to one another. Statements representing *heritage* and *affinity*, in particular, were not seen by respondents as being mutually exclusive.

Affinity does not display strong internal consistency either—it is apparently too generic and broad an orientation to elicit consistent levels of support from respondents. Indeed, *affinity* can encompass practically any valuation of place that is not rooted in *heritage*, and it can be used to argue for or against collective action (e.g. statements 7 and 5, respectively). Given this internal diversity, it is perhaps surprising that one expression of *affinity*—Statement 6—is positively correlated with all the other *affinity* statements. Such a statement might be regarded as the "quintessential" exemplar of *affinity*.

Among the perspectives on change, *loss* is negatively correlated with both *inevitability* and *gain*, but the latter two are not negatively correlated. This suggests that Maconians may fall into two, rather than three, distinct camps regarding change—those

who see it as a problem (*loss*) and those who see it as a beneficial, or at least acceptable, phenomenon (*gain/inevitability*).

Correlations among responses to *collective* and *individual* coda statements provide a more nuanced picture of Macon residents' views on natural resource management. Respondents apparently did not see calls for protection of cherished landscape assets (statements 7 and 13) as incompatible with opposition to regulation (statements 3 and 5). However, supporters of all three *collective* exemplars opposed the *laissez-faire* attitude toward landscape change espoused by Statement 11. Meanwhile, supporters of Fouts' statement on "land planning" (14) opposed all three *individual* exemplars.

These response patterns suggest a continuum of attitudes. At one extreme are the supporters of Statement 14, who believe that collective responsibilities must trump individual rights if the community's *heritage* is to be saved. At the other extreme are supporters of Statement 11, who do not believe in interfering with the free market in any way. In between is everyone else: Maconians who feel unhappy about the degradation of the landscape but may also value individual freedoms. This strikes me as quite a plausible characterization of Maconians' positions on land use policy—some residents regard planning as the only way to protect shared resources, others are willing to sacrifice those resources in favor of unrestricted property rights, and most lie somewhere in between. This distribution of perspectives suggests that a truism from national political discourse may apply: in order to prevail in the policy arena, both planning proponents and property rights activists will need to "capture the middle." In this case, the "middle" seems to consist of citizens who have not paid that much attention to land use issues, and

whose attitudes are therefore characterized by internal inconsistencies. These are people who would like the mountains to stay undeveloped but would also like everyone to be able to use their land as they see fit; they have not considered that these objectives might come into conflict.

The two ends of the aforementioned continuum did not garner equal support among survey respondents, however. Statement 14, as discussed previously, was the most popular statement in the concourse with an average rating of 4.60. Statement 11, on the other hand, was the least popular (1.76); on average, respondents "somewhat opposed" its message. The three *collective* exemplars collectively received an average rating of 4.46, while the average rating for the three *individual* exemplars was 2.51. In short, *collective* approaches to natural resource attracted considerably more support than *individual* approaches.

Testing hypothesized response correlations, however, does not reveal patterns of variation in the survey data as a whole. To do this, a factor analysis was conducted on the same data set that was used to derive the Pearson Correlation Coefficients. Factor analysis provides a means of explaining variation among a set of variables—in this case, levels of support for the fourteen statements—in terms of a smaller number of underlying *latent variables* (DeVellis 2003). In this analysis, these *latent variables* can be seen as prevalent narrative articulations through which survey respondents make sense of their environment.

The initial factor analysis was performed using the principal components method. Four factors were deemed significant based on the eigenvalue rule[45] and rotated using

[45] Factors with eigenvalues < 1 contain less information than do the response data for a single statement, and therefore should not be retained for analysis (Kaiser 1960, DeVellis 2003).

Varimax rotation. The resulting factor pattern (Table 5.13) shows which statements exhibit strong positive correlations with each factor.

Statement	***Factor 1***	***Factor 2***	***Factor 3***	***Factor 4***
1	0.713	0.120	-0.207	0.019
4	0.710	0.182	0.003	-0.086
13	0.632	-0.157	-0.265	0.222
9	0.610	0.084	-0.431	0.130
14	0.561	-0.493	0.085	0.208
3	0.160	0.849	-0.003	-0.071
5	0.119	0.810	0.059	0.169
11	-0.356	0.476	0.246	-0.205
12	-0.021	-0.001	0.768	0.048
8	-0.300	0.172	0.703	0.072
10	-0.125	0.008	0.677	-0.067
2	-0.158	-0.056	0.068	0.777
6	0.233	0.078	0.006	0.712
7	0.430	-0.106	-0.145	0.474

Table 5.13. Factor loadings of survey statement responses. Factors are ranked in order of how much variation they explain. Statements that are mostly highly correlated with each factor are highlighted.

As it turns out, these four factors correspond quite well to hypothesized narrative articulations. In Table 5.14, I name the four factors and indicate which perspectives they reflect.

Factor	***Name***	***Perspective(s)***
1	Heritage preservation	*heritage/loss/collective*
2	Property rights	*individual/inevitability/affinity*
3	Pro-development	*gain/inevitability*
4	Value protection	*affinity/collective*

Table 5.14. Names and perspectival composition of the four factors.

The first factor, *heritage preservation*, represents a complete narrative that includes an orientation, a complication/result, and a coda. According to this narrative, the community's *heritage* is jeopardized by change and needs to be protected through *collective* action. The narrative encompasses both problem and solution: to value Macon

County's *heritage*, it implies, is to want to see that heritage preserved. This factor, which explains the most variation in the data, could well be described as the preeminent narrative to emerge from the research in Macon County; its prevalence further discredits claims that locals are all averse to planning. As discussed earlier in relation to Statement 14, I expect that this narrative would have unparalleled rhetorical potency if deployed in public land use policy discussions.

The second factor supports my observation in Section 4.5.1 that *property rights* represents not only a political position but also a distinctive way of talking about place. A *property rights* narrative can proceed from either an *affinity* or a *heritage* orientation: an individual may be attracted to Macon County by the lack of restrictions (e.g. Statement 5), or they may see property rights as protecting the independence that rural Maconians have traditionally enjoyed. Neither orientation is required, however, because *property rights* derives its primary legitimation from creed, rather than lived experience.[46] Indeed, as a narrative it is frequently deployed to dismiss experience-based or empirical claims. For example, *property rights* is frequently used in Macon County to argue that any piece of property can be developed, regardless of topography. A property owner's right to develop a steep mountainside parcel, for example, is in no way infringed by empirical evidence that houses on the same mountainside are literally sliding downhill and are accessed by roads too steep for emergency vehicles.

Like *property rights*, the third factor represents a narrative that is often used to support development. This *pro-development* narrative, however, is rhetorically distinct: it proceeds from pragmatic optimism, rather than legal principle. *Pro-development* is

[46] As discussed previously, this narrative derives legitimation primarily from Lockean conceptions of property, a strict constructionist interpretation of the United States Constitution, and free market ideologies.

another narrative without a single, defining orientation; it can be readily invoked by anyone. It represents the intersection of two perspectives on the results of change: *gain* and *inevitability*. As discussed above, correlations among survey responses have led me to believe that these perspectives, which I hypothesized to be distinct, are actually unified in Macon County discourse: describing growth as inevitable, it seems, is tantamount to describing it as good. If "things change whether you like it or not" (Statement 10), the implication is that there is no point in objecting to change, so it should be embraced instead; change means progress.

Both *property rights* and *pro-development* narratives tend to reflect a belief in the "free market," but for different reasons: the former views the free market as right, while the latter views it as beneficial. A committed *property rights* advocate may openly decry the effects of the market on the landscape but nonetheless defend its legitimacy, much as a civil liberties advocate might defend the free speech rights of someone whose views she found abhorrent. From a *pro-development* standpoint, by contrast, growth is good for everyone. This perception recalls the two senses of the term *development* that were identified in Section 4.5.1: *economic development*, which is largely seen as desirable, versus *development* as a landscape phenomenon, which is more often seen as problematic. In the *pro-development* narrative, *development* is regarded primarily in the former sense.

The fourth factor shows that the hypothesized existence of a distinct *affinity* perspective is not groundless: the statements that make up this *value protection* narrative are united by their attraction to place. Like *heritage preservation*, *value protection* includes a call to action: in the words of Statement 7, "people definitely need to think

about what it is they really like and value about a place and commit to protecting those few things at all costs." The fact that this statement is most highly correlated with the *value protection*, while Statement 14 is most highly correlated with *heritage preservation*, suggests that respondents were able to tell which of these collective codas was premised on *heritage* and which was premised on *affinity*; this divergence lends credibility to the hypothesized distinction between the two orientation perspectives.

The survey also provided an opportunity to measure the effect of community narrative invocation per se on support for messages. To test this effect, I have compared responses to the segments of LTP discourse used in the preceding discussion (Table 5.10) with responses to statements were not presented in the words of community members. These latter statements, which are scattered through other sections of the Macon County Opinion Survey, were designed to gauge support for perspectives that were comparable to the fourteen statements described above. Their wording was based on the hypothesized perspectival distinctions from the community project and refined through cognitive interviewing. Unlike the discourse segments, these statements are not described as representing the voices of particular community members, and they are intentionally devoid of local references or phrasings; rather, they are "generic survey items" that could be used virtually anywhere. Table 5.15 compares survey respondents' average levels of support for discourse segments and "generic statements" that measure comparable perspectives.

Perspective	*Discourse Segment*	*Generic Statement*
Heritage	4.035	3.72
Affinity	4.385	4.265
Loss	4.135	4.06
Inevitability	2.53	2.2
Gain	3.4	3.15
Collective	4.51	3.69
Individual	2.89	3.01

Table 5.15. Levels of support for different perspectives, as expressed through LTP discourse segments and generic statements. All values represent average ratings of support on a five-point scale, with higher scores indicating greater support. If a perspective was measured by multiple items, values represent the average rating of those items.

The first observation to be made on the basis of this comparison is that levels of support for a given perspective are generally quite comparable across discourse segments and generic statements. This parity bolsters the validity of the measure, since it suggests that the items being compared are likely to be measuring the same thing. That said, the second observation is that, with only one exception, the discourse segments received higher ratings than comparable generic statements, lending support to my hypothesis that framing messages through local narratives can boost community support for those messages. A closely related factor is that people may tend to favor any statement by a fellow community member over a depersonalized research statement.

The greatest difference is found among expressions of a *collective* perspective, where discourse segments were rated almost a full point higher than generic statements. This increase reflects both a challenge and an opportunity for resource management agents. It is a challenge in that it reflects a tendency to support community members' desire to protect their landscape but to shy away from more "concrete" affirmations of collective management. For example, as previously discussed, respondents were

tremendously supportive of Fouts' Statement 14 (average rating = 4.60). However, they were less supportive of the following generic statement: *The public should have a role in developing guidelines for how individuals use their land* (average rating = 3.69). If enacted, the two statements would have the same land use outcome: the "land planning" that Fouts calls for would necessarily involve the development of public guidelines for individuals' land use. Like Fouts, however, many Maconians are apparently hesitant to confront this realization directly. Here we once again confront the widespread desire to protect shared resources without encroaching on individual rights.

At the same time, the increased support for local expressions of a *collective* viewpoint also suggests the potential of a discursive approach to strengthen natural resource management initiatives. If a locally-resonant statement like #14, rather than a generic policy position, is invoked to justify a proposed collective action, it might well help that collective action gain a sympathetic public hearing. Such a statement should not be used to obscure the legal ramifications of a proposed measure, but rather to help community members perceive the connection between the policy under consideration and their own values. The documentary presentations at the POL/LTP public meetings demonstrated the ability of personal testimony to lower participants' defenses and foster a respectful dialogue. If such a technique were able to boost public support for a measure from "3.69" to "4.60" (the difference in support for generic and local *collective* statements), it could easily mean the difference between failure and success in the policy arena.

Interestingly, the reverse seems to be true for expressions of an *individual* perspective, the only perspective that received higher ratings as a generic statement than

as a local discourse segment; respondents apparently favored property rights in the abstract more than the particular property rights arguments of their fellow community members. This discrepancy may point to a tension within *individual* narrative: even if people believe that citizens in general are entitled to certain freedoms, they may be suspicious when individuals espouse those freedoms. People tend to see themselves as responsible, and therefore unlikely to abuse their rights, but they may regard the motives of others less favorably. If this interpretation is accurate, it suggests that property rights advocates in Macon County may be in the process of depleting their own political capital: some community members who support their position philosophically may nonetheless dislike the way in which it is being defended locally.

The survey also enabled the evaluation of another expression of LTP participants' views: the visions generated through the small group discussion process. Table 5.16 lists the "top ten" visions from the public meetings and the average rating that survey respondents gave to each one.

Vision	***Average Support***
Increased and improved planning	4.07
Protecting water quality/watershed and storm water management	4.66
Expanding restrictions on building on ridge tops	4.42
Encouraging incentives for voluntary conservation by land owners and developers	4.24
Clustering development in appropriate areas	3.09
Regulating development on steep slopes	4.38
Encouraging economic development that delivers quality jobs	4.43
Harmonizing growth with community character	4.40
Protecting/improving appearance of main commercial corridors	4.43
Assuring and expanding affordable housing opportunities	4.00

Table 5.16. Survey respondents' average levels of support (on a five point scale) for the "top ten" visions generated through the small group discussion process at the LTP public meetings.

On average, survey respondents expressed support for all of visions save one, though the levels of support do not correspond to the original rankings. In fact, the top recommendation from LTP (*increased and improved planning*) received the second-lowest average rating. As discussed above, survey respondents demonstrated some hesitancy to endorse planning outright.

The least popular vision was *clustering development in appropriate areas*. Clustering is a controversial and widely-misunderstood planning tool. Its proponents see it as a way to promote landscape integrity by encouraging or requiring developers to site houses closer together on a portion of a site, thereby leaving other portions open. If coordinated at a landscape scale, this technique could be used to protect viewsheds or sensitive habitat. However, to many people clustering simply suggests high-density development across the entire landscape, which challenges the prevalent suburban ideal of having one's own little estate. The one-to-two-acre lot is now the development standard in increasingly parcelized Macon County, as in other rural communities.

Amenity migrants are attracted to the mountains by dreams of secluded hideaway—dreams that the real estate industry is careful to cultivate. Therefore, the idea of rubbing shoulders with one's neighbors goes against the grain. It takes a broader perspective to realize that low-density development causes ecologically-damaging fragmentation, while higher-density development could actually help preserve highly valued amenities. The difference in support for clustering between the LTP participants and the survey respondents suggests a difference in the way in which the idea was introduced and explained at the meetings as opposed to the survey.

Protecting ridgetops received the strongest support from survey respondents, reflecting the strong symbolic importance that horizon lines hold in the mountains. This suggests a strong public mandate for a ridgetop protection law. Interestingly, survey respondents also indicated that they support a subdivision ordinance (average rating = 4.31)—the same measure that prompted such outcry in the hearing described at the beginning of this chapter.

On the whole, the focus group and survey data that I have presented in this section affirm the narratives identified through the LTP project. These evaluation findings suggest that, by and large, Macon County residents support land use planning if it is framed appropriately. Natural resource management initiatives show promise of garnering greater public support if they are linked to local heritage.

Critics of these conclusions can point to the fact that slightly under half of survey recipients returned their questionnaires. It remains possible that the views of the other half differ markedly from those of the respondents—a claim that will no doubt be made by those who would still claim to speak for the "silent majority." Ultimately, however, Macon County policymakers will have to decide who their functional constituency is: is it all citizens, or is it those who show interest in an issue? Over the past three years, the LTP project team has offered Maconians numerous and varied opportunities to participate: interviews, focus groups, community meetings, a workshop, and a survey that included four mailings plus a reminder phone call. Our participant demographics show that both locals and outsiders have taken part in every stage of the process, and survey data suggests that approximately one third of community members may recognize LTP by name. If, after all of this, an individual declines to participate, how much more should

be done to ensure that their views are represented in the outcome? Should their silence be privileged over the voices of the approximately 1200 community members who did take the time to participate? I would argue that, while ongoing efforts should always be made to include ever more community members in resource management dialogues, the perspectives and narratives represented through this study are representative enough to be useful in guiding the development of environmental policy and resource management goals.

5.6. Results II: The scaling of narrative resonance

In this section, I investigate, based on a uniform set of measures, how support for the narratives from each community varied across all five communities. First, focus group participants were asked to evaluate a group of statements that represented perspectives from each of the five community project. Then they were asked to rank their support for an array of images and an array of values by means of Q-sorts. Each exercise is described below.

5.6.1. Statement response comparison

Focus group participants in all five communities were asked to respond to the following five statements, one drawn from each community project:

> *1. Uwharries*
>
> That is my hope—that logging could fit with the economy or the kind of recreation based economy, but the logging would be a little different. Maybe you do some more low-impact sustainable forestry, and you would get some extra money to supplement what you're not getting by turning over pines every thirty years, from other, from other places.

I feel like in my lifetime I'll never see the forests around there like I saw when I was growing up. But I just have to hope that somebody will in the future.

2. Eastern Catawba

When it comes out to here, everybody's a neighbor. "Hey neighbor, how you doing?", "How's everything going," you know, it's neighbor, it's one big community that shows how to share their love.

But I would basically like to see it continue to stay the way it is.

3. Stanley Creek

I'm one who wants to see much of this kept as the natural area. There's going to be some developments—you're not going to stop development. We can only limit the amount of development by having large conservancy areas

What do you, what do you hope that your grandchildren will, will see and experience here?

Well the two over here already know how to pick up rocks out of the garden, what the garden is, how you work in the garden and things like that. I mean this one is a little too young yet, but by next spring he'll be ready to learn how to do things out in the garden. Now they, if they live with the land, they'll stay on it.

And their children, and their children's children…

And on, and on. It depends upon how, how well they are connected with it. You can't predict how each generation is going to connect to the land.

Right.

You can only hope.

4. Macon

I'd like to see something like the mix of rural and town uses that we've had traditionally. I hope that increasingly we can have other types of what might be called "urban employment" for people that are self-employed or work on the internet.... But such a thing that preserves the rural landscape and some of the rural uses because if there are no farm and forest uses, there won't be any farm and forest landscape.

The principal product of the forest—I think most foresters would agree at this point—is clean water. And it is vitally important to us.

I would like to see the floodplain kept free of houses as possible and I would like to see the tops of the ridges and the forested slopes kept, because I think we need it for a clean air, we need it for clean water and we need it for the rural uses of land that's going to keep us a rural economy and a rural landscape.

5. Western Rowan

We can't really preserve farmland without preserving the farmer. I'm for preserving the farmer, if we can preserve the farmer where he could make a living and support his family that's pretty equal to what you can make in the municipality, then that's one way.

But that's gonna never happen without a lot of financial support directly towards subsidizing farmers. But I think with the farmland trust, development rights, that has some potential if we can just figure out how to fund that.

Participants were not told the origins of the statements. They listened to an audio recording of each statement, which was also printed in their workbooks. After listening to each statement, they were asked to answer the following three questions:

1. How well do you understand this statement?
2. How well does this statement reflect your own values?
3. How well would the perspective expressed in this statement motivate people here to protect the character of this community?

Responses were measured using a four-point scale (4 = "Very well," 1 = "Not at all well"). After the participants had responded to all five statements individually, we discussed their reactions as a group.

These five statements were selected because they are particularly representative of the most frequently-occurring functional and thematic narrative types from each community project. Therefore, I hypothesized that, on average, focus group participants would respond most favorably to the statement from their own community: they would understand it better, agree with it more, and expect it to do a better job motivating their fellow community members. The results of these comparisons are displayed in tables 5.17-5.19.

		STATEMENTS				
		Stanley Creek	**Eastern Catawba**	**Western Rowan**	**Uwharries**	**Macon**
FOCUS GROUPS	**Stanley Creek**	3.25	***4.00***	3.50	3.25	3.25
	Eastern Catawba	3.57	3.86	***3.86***	3.29	3.71
	Western Rowan	3.67	3.83	3.67	***3.50***	3.83
	Uwharries	***3.71***	***4.00***	3.71	3.43	***3.86***
	Macon	3.56	3.44	3.33	3.22	3.56

Table 5.17. Average levels of understanding indicated by focus group participants in response to statements from each community project. Responses are on a four-point scale (4 = "Very well," 1 = "Not at all well"). Outlined cells were hypothesized to hold the highest values. Shaded cells indicate the statements that were most strongly supported by each focus group. Values in bold italics indicate the focus groups that responded most favorably to each statement.

		STATEMENTS				
		Stanley Creek	**Eastern Catawba**	**Western Rowan**	**Uwharries**	**Macon**
FOCUS GROUPS	**Stanley Creek**	3.25	3.75	2.50	3.25	3.50
	Eastern Catawba	3.14	3.57	3.29	2.86	3.71
	Western Rowan	***4.00***	***3.83***	***3.33***	***3.67***	3.83
	Uwharries	3.57	3.57	3.14	3.29	***3.86***
	Macon	3.33	2.78	3.00	3.22	3.50

Table 5.18. Average degree to which statements reflected the values of focus group participants. Formatting has the same meaning as in Table 5.17.

		STATEMENTS				
		Stanley Creek	**Eastern Catawba**	**Western Rowan**	**Uwharries**	**Macon**
FOCUS GROUPS	**Stanley Creek**	3.00	2.75	2.25	2.50	3.50
	Eastern Catawba	3.29	3.43	2.86	2.71	***3.71***
	Western Rowan	***3.33***	***3.50***	***3.17***	3.17	3.33
	Uwharries	3.14	3.43	3.00	***3.29***	3.29
	Macon	3.11	3.00	3.11	2.56	3.22

Table 5.19. Estimated motivation capacity of each statement in each community. Formatting has the same meaning as in Table 5.17.

The tables above do not illustrate any consistent patterns of variation in support for statements across communities. In no case were focus group participants statistically more likely to favor statements from their own community over those from other communities.[47] Macon focus group participants consistently favored the Macon statement over others, and in two out of three cases the Western Rowan statement was most highly rated by Western Rowan focus group participants, but these findings are not statistically significant. By and large, these results support the finding from the narrative beta-diversity analysis of the community project data that the discourses of these communities are more similar than they are different. Focus group participants mostly failed to distinguish between the statement from their own community and those from others. The slight exceptions were the Macon and Western Rowan statements, whose mentions of mountain and agricultural land use issues, respectively, were particularly salient to focus groups in each of those communities.

[47] Based on *t*-tests comparing responses to each statement by focus group and responses of each focus group by statement.

Focus group participants in all five focus groups regarded all five statements fairly positively. This suggests that, at a broader scale, narratives identified through the community projects are persuasive across North Carolina communities and regions. Analyses of the community project data suggested, after all, that most of the identified narrative types were shared across most of the communities, even if their relative abundances and particular referents differed. What we may have identified are rhetorical resources that can help to motivate regional or inter-regional resource management initiatives: the beginnings of a "narrative toolbox" for resource management agents in the North Carolina Piedmont and Mountains. Further research would help to test the validity and applicability of such a toolbox. Indeed, the best way to further establish the resonance of these narratives could be to deploy them in diverse resource management campaigns and track the outcomes.

5.6.2. Q-sorts

Connections to place in the five communities were also compared through Q-factor analysis, a technique for identifying and differentiating the perspectives held by members of a study population, by investigating how individuals, rather than other variables, group (Brown 1980). As a basis for this analysis, focus group participants were asked to complete two *Q-sorts*, in which they arrayed a concourse of items along a normal distribution according to their preferences. The worksheet for such an exercise looks like this:

Like least <----------> Like most

Each participant was given nine items and asked to arrange them on the worksheet. Only horizontal position on the distribution carries significance; vertical does not. This format forces the participant to choose one item that they like most and one that they like least, with the others ordered in between. Factor analysis can then be used to identify the "defining sorts" that reflect underlying differences in perspective within the population (Brown 1980).

Though Q-sorts have typically been conducted using statements, images can also be sorted. Participants in my focus groups did both, thereby enabling me to study responses to verbal and visual aspects of the POL/LTP document. For one sort, they arranged nine value statements; for the other, they arranged nine photographs from the project region. The nine statements, listed below, reflected salient ecological narratives from the community project discourses:

1. I value the lack of restrictions on how individuals can use their property in this community.
2. I value this area because my family has been living here for a long time.
3. Spending time outdoors here makes me feel healthy and happy.
4. I appreciate the richness of the natural environment here.
5. I value land as a source of income/livelihood.
6. I am part of a close-knit community of family and friends here.
7. I am attracted to the beauty of this landscape.
8. I feel a religious or spiritual connection to this place.
9. I value this landscape because of its rich history.

The nine photographs, all of which were taken by me, included scenes from the Piedmont and Mountain regions. They were chosen to represent landscape types that had been ascribed high and low values by community project participants. The locations of the photographs were not identified to focus group participants prior to the Q-sort exercise. The photographs and locations are listed in Appendix D.

Factor analysis was performed using PQMethod 2.11, a Q-factor analysis software package. The principle component method was used to extract factors. Factors that were deemed significant according to the eigenvalue rule were rotated using Varimax rotation.

Seven factors were identified through analysis of the value statement sorts. The Q-sort that represents each factor is listed below, showing the placement of each value statement[48] in the distribution. For each factor, I also list any *distinguishing statements* (statements whose values are significantly correlated with that factor) and *pure representations* (individual focus group participants whose sorts closely matched that factor[49]), as well as the percentage of total response variation that the factor explains.

Factor 1: Heritage preservation

		7. aesthetic		
	5. economic	8. religious	3. outdoor	
1. property	4. environment	9. historical	6. social	2. genealogical

Variation explained: 28%
Distinguishing statements: none
Pure representations: eb2, mb4, u4, w1, w4, w5

[48] Value statements are denoted by their number and the connection to place they represent.

[49] "[P]ure factor representations can be determined as persons with loadings in excess of $2.58(1/\sqrt{N})$ on one factor only, where N is the number of Q statements" (Brown 1980: 262). Focus groups are identified as follows: *ea* = Eastern Catawba 1 (white); *eb* = Eastern Catawba 2 (African-American); *ma* = Macon 1; *mb* = Macon 2; *s* = Stanley Creek; *u* = Uwharries; *w* = Western Rowan.

Factor 2: Affinity

		8. religious		
	5. economic	6. social	9. historical	
2. genealogical	1. property	3. outdoor	4. environment	7. aesthetic

Variation explained: 18%
Distinguishing statements: genealogical ($p < .05$)
Pure representations: ma4, mb2

Factor 3: Historical preservation

		1. property		
	3. outdoor	4. environment	2. genealogical	
6. social	5. economic	8. religious	7. aesthetic	9. historical

Variation explained: 11%
Distinguishing statements: historical ($p < .05$)
Pure representations: ea4

Factor 4: Personal encounter

		1. property		
	9. historical	2. genealogical	7. aesthetic	
6. social	4. environment	5. economic	8. religious	3. outdoor

Variation explained: 11%
Distinguishing statements: none
Pure representations: u5

Factor 5: Conservative creedal

		4. environment		
	3. outdoor	6. social	2. genealogical	
5. economic	9. historical	7. aesthetic	8. religious	1. property

Variation explained: 11%
Distinguishing statements: property ($p < .01$)
Pure representations: ea5

Factor 6: Earth versus heaven

		1. property		
	9. historical	2. genealogical	3. outdoor	
8. religious	5. economic	7. aesthetic	4. environment	6. social

Variation explained: 9%
Distinguishing statements: religious ($p < .01$)
Pure representations: ea5

Factor 7: Agrarian ethic

		9. historical		
	6. social	4. environment	2. genealogical	
1. property	7. aesthetic	3. outdoor	5. economic	8. religious

Variation explained: 9%
Distinguishing statements: none
Pure representations: ma1, ea7

Like the foregoing response comparison, the value Q-sort does not reveal notable patterns of variation along community lines. Instead, the salient discursive distinction lies between locals and outsiders. Factor 1, *heritage preservation*, resembles the factor of the same name from the factor analysis of Macon County Opinion Survey data (Section 5.5.4, Table 5.14): it reflects a perspective, rooted in local heritage, in which the community is preferred over the individual. Factor 2, by contrast, suggests an *affinity* orientation, in which place is valued for its aesthetic, historical, and environmental qualities. In this case, genealogy is valued least rather than most. It is notable that history is valued more highly in this sort than in the Factor 1 sort: this illuminates the distinction between *historical* narrative, which is accessible to anyone and compatible with *affinity*, and *genealogical* narrative, which is internal to family *heritage*.

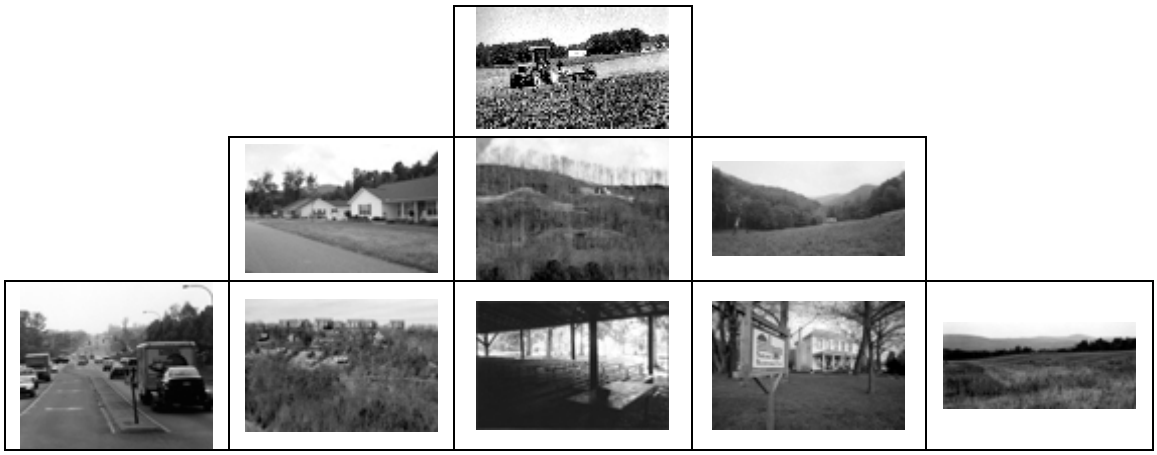
As one would guess, Factor 1 was associated with local focus group participants, while Factor 2 was associated with outsiders. Pure representations of Factor 1 were all locals, while pure representations of Factor 2 were both outsiders. The difference between locals' and outsiders' loadings for these two factors was highly statistically significant ($p < .001$). The divide between these two factors, which together explain 46 percent of the response variation, suggests that the primary determinant of variation in rural North Carolinians' discursive outlooks may not be the community in which they live, but whether or not they grew up there.

The remaining factors suggest other dimensions of variation in focus group participants' connection to place. Factor 3, *historical preservation*, is not to be confused with *heritage preservation*: in the historical, value is placed on the maintenance of appearances and tradition. Factor 4, *personal encounter*, expresses connection to place through direct, personal experience of the outdoors—an experience that can take on spiritual significance. The spiritual and personal are also emphasized in Factor 7, *agrarian ethic*, which reflects a multi-generational working relationship with the land. On the other hand, Factor 6 (*Earth versus heaven*) emphatically denies any religious connection to place, which is regarded as "nature worship:" according to this view, the socio-cultural and biophysical landscapes should be appreciated in their own right, while religion's proper place is the church.

Factor 5, *conservative creedal*, reflects a sense of place that is shaped by principle: faith in property rights is foremost, followed by religion and genealogy. Interestingly, this factor too was more popular among locals than outsiders to a highly significant degree ($p < .001$). This does not mean that all or even most locals prized property rights; as Factor 1 indicates, many locals held the opposite view. What it does mean is that some locals valued property rights, while no outsiders did. This factor analysis attests to locals' wide range of opinions regarding individual rights and collective values.

The same analysis was performed on the image sorts; six significant factors were identified. They are described below.

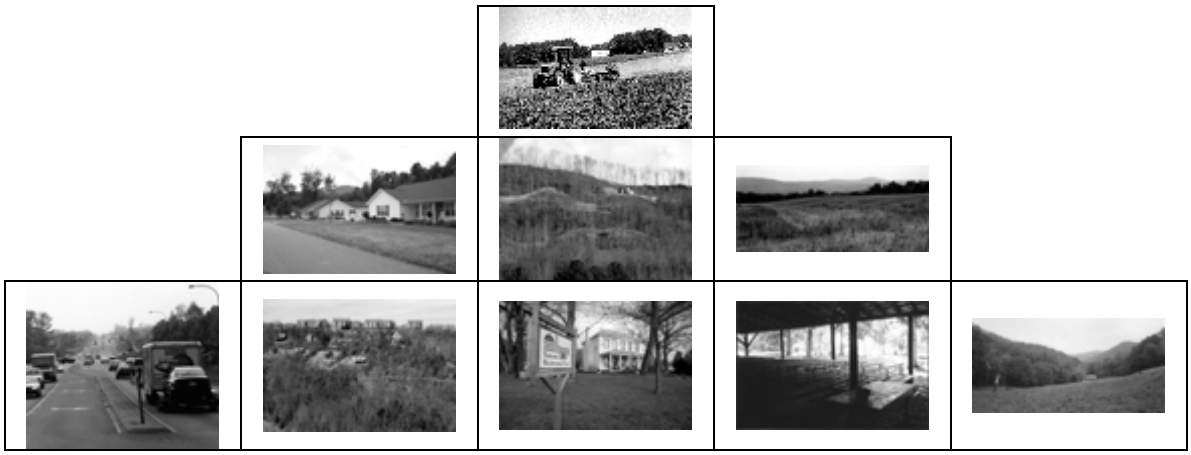
Factor 1: Mountain amenity



Variation explained: 31%
Pure representations: none

Distinguishing image:

Factor 2: Piedmont amenity



Variation explained: 25%
Pure representations: s1, ea6, ea7, u3

Distinguishing image: none

Factor 3: Suburban-agrarian

Variation explained: 11%
Pure representations: eb4

Distinguishing image:

Factor 4: Rural

Variation explained: 10%
Pure representations: eb1

Distinguishing image: none

Factor 5: Mountain spatial

Variation explained: 10%
Pure representations: ma1, ma2, u1

Distinguishing image: none

Factor 6: Piedmont traditional

Variation explained: 9%
Pure representations: eb3

Distinguishing image:

The results of the image sort suggest that there may be some differences in the ways that Mountain and Piedmont residents view the environment. These differences are discernible when factors 1 and 2 are compared. Both of these factors reflect an *amenity* orientation; not surprisingly, most focus group participants were attracted to scenic landscapes. Piedmont focus group participants, on average, load more highly on Factor

2, while Mountain (Macon) focus group participants load more highly on Factor 1. Though not statistically significant, this split is suggestive of some regionally distinctive readings of place.

The two sorts differ in just two ways. First, the images of the Rhyne house and McKenzie's Grove Campground switch places: the former is higher ranked in Factor 1 and the latter in Factor 2. This likely reflects a greater familiarity with and affinity for the Campground landscape among Piedmont residents (especially those from Eastern Catawba).

The second difference is less intuitive: in Factor 1, the Uwharries photograph occupies the most favored position, while in Factor 2 it is supplanted by the view of Rickman Cove (Macon County). These two images were the most popular overall, and their tranquil beauty makes it easy to see why. What seems initially surprising, however, is that Mountain residents tended to prefer the Piedmont scene, while Piedmont residents tended to prefer the Mountains. This shows that the most popular landscapes are not necessarily the most close to home: what is different can often appear more attractive. To Piedmont focus group participants, Rickman Cove resembled a perfect mountain getaway. To Macon participants, the Uwharrie landscape represented an amenity whose preciousness they were especially able to appreciate: a completely uninhabited mountain landscape. As discussed in Chapter Four, the mountain real estate industry has instilled in Maconians' consciousness the idea that a "pristine" view is best; from this perspective, even a landscape with one visible house, like Rickman Cove, is inferior to a landscape with no houses. Piedmont residents, less inculcated into the cult of isolation, preferred a landscape with a pleasant home that they could imagine occupying.

Factors 1 and 2 reflect preferences for remoteness but are otherwise fairly inattentive to the pattern of development. Not so Factor 5: this factor reflects an acute sensitivity to the differences between traditional and non-traditional development patterns, particularly in mountainous landscapes. This is evidenced by the assignment of the Fulcher Vistas photograph to the lowest rank. That photograph served as an indicator of how focus group participants were reading the landscapes, because it was interpreted in two quite different ways. To participants unfamiliar with issues surrounding mountainside development, the scene appeared innocuous or even appealing: a lone house on a hillside, probably a nice, isolated retreat. To participants who have seen mountain development patterns change in recent decades, however, the image was much more ominous. They could see that the trees had been thinned, and telltale swaths of bare earth hinted that the single house would not be isolated for long: soon the mountainside would be festooned with other houses and access roads. They also noticed how steep the slope was and questioned the wisdom of developing it.

Seen in this light, the Fulcher Vistas image was even worse than the ridgetop condominiums of Gatlinburg; at least those structures were already in place. Fulcher Vistas represented a wound that was still open, and one that was very close to home for Macon residents. Fulcher Vistas was also worse than the crowded multilane thoroughfare in Huntersville, which was generally the most reviled image. The highest scoring picture on Factor 5, meanwhile, was Rickman Cove—a model of the traditional Mountain development pattern, in which a homestead and its pastures are nestled at the base of forested slopes.

Tellingly, the pure representations of Factor 5 were all sorted by locals from mountainous communities: Macon and the Uwharries. It is plausible that these individuals would be particularly well positioned to perceive and decry the changes in mountainside development patterns. This factor supports the finding from the POL/LTP data that *topographic* narrative types were invoked more frequently in communities whose landscapes are more topographically varied (see Section 4.6.2).

Like Factor 5, Factor 6 reflects a preference for traditional land uses, but this time from a Piedmont perspective. Suburbia is not preferred, but neither is mountain scenery. Instead, the most appealing images depict time-honored scenes of Piedmont life: a historic farmhouse, a field under cultivation, and a campground arbor.

Factors 3 and 4 both reflect a taste for pastoral landscapes, but they differ markedly in their view of suburbia: in the Factor 3 sort, the image of a subdivision is accorded the highest rank, while in Factor 4 it ranked lowest. In Factor 3, the subdivision is viewed as sharing some of the same appeal as farmland: it represents the productive use of a verdant landscape. The ascription of agrarian/pastoral values to suburbia suggests how this land use has risen to dominance. According to Factor 4, however, the subdivision is anathema to the productive or aesthetic value of rural landscapes: parcelization is seen as the representing the death of the farm.

It is worth noting that the pure representations of factors 3, 4, and 6 all come from the Eastern Catawba Focus Group 2 (African American). This reflects a wide range of opinion within that group, and it suggests that the African American focus group participants were evaluating landscapes based on different criteria than white participants. Factors 1, 2, and 5 reflect a broad consensus among white participants

regarding the "amenities" that make a landscape desirable: a premium is placed on remoteness and topographic variation. This factor analysis suggests that these amenity traits, which parallel the amenity migration drivers identified by McGranahan (1999), are not necessarily based in universal responses to the biophysical environment; instead, they might be shared by most whites but not necessarily by other ethnic/cultural groups.

5.6.3. Reviewing comparative evaluation findings

Through the comparative focus group exercises described above, some dimensions of an inter-regional conversation on land use can begin to be discerned. The results consistently suggest that the ecological narratives of the five project communities are at least partly shared; ways of expressing connections to place are mutually understood and appreciated among focus group participants in all locales. Focus groups participants' views are generally aligned with those of project participants, thereby attesting to IPRM's effectiveness in identifying broadly resonant narratives.

At the same time, the findings do not suggest that regional ecological discourse is entirely homogeneous. The focus group exercises only tested support for generic expressions of value; inter-regional support for these values does not mean that all of the communities' ecological discourses are identical. As noted in Section 4.7, many of the referents community members use in talking about place are inherently locally-specific: they are the symbols and metonyms through which sites in the local landscape are imbued with meaning. For example, just because members of other communities' share Uwharrie residents' support for sustainable forestry does not mean that they would appreciate the particular significance(s) that forest land holds for Uwharrie residents.

To the extent that comparative analysis reveals shared ecological discourse, it also sheds light on the emergent variations that characterize that discourse—variations that can only be perceived at the regional or interregional scale. The value sort responses reflected a divide between locals and outsiders that extended across all the communities. The image sort suggested that in addition to local/outsider status, region, and race play a role in shaping ecological values. Awareness of these larger-scale dynamics is helpful in understanding discursive variation at the community level. Gaining further insight into the mechanisms that drive these variations at the region scale and higher, as well as the effects they are having on community ecological discourses, would be a productive area for further research.

5.7. Lessons from the evaluation process: looking back, looking ahead

If there is one overarching finding from the participatory evaluation of POL/LTP, it is this: the iterative participatory research model was able to identify ecological narratives that were broadly resonant in the communities where the research took place. Perspectives articulated by project participants were supported by community members who had not participated in those projects. The more extensive evaluation in Macon County suggested that members of the community at large 1) mostly favored the same orientations and codas as project participants; 2) articulated discourse segments in ways that partially, though not fully, reproduced hypothesized narrative types from LTP discourse; and 3) usually preferred local discursive value expressions over "generic" equivalents. My community partners also attested to the persuasiveness of POL/LTP narratives: the participatory research process engendered solidarity across the board, and

led in varying degrees toward resource management capacity-building in the communities.

The evaluation process also affirmed the existence of an interpretive repertoire that is shared across the project communities. It seems that members of different communities often respond to the same narrative types, even if those types are employed in distinct local contexts. This evaluative finding affirms the results of the project data beta-diversity analyses, in which a majority of narrative types were found to present across communities and regions—albeit in different abundances and with locally-specific referents.

Evidence from the evaluation seems to suggest that the iterative participatory research model (IPRM) tested through POL and LTP has considerable potential to help engage local—and perhaps regional or interregional—publics in community-based natural resource management initiatives. All indications suggest that employing this participatory research would broaden grassroots constituencies for collective natural resource management action: according to available records, the projects appear to have attracted considerably more community members than they repelled.

5.7.1. Broader support than what? The control sample problem

My ability to prove that IPRM can increase public participation in and support for collective natural resource management initiatives, thereby enabling sustainable land use outcomes, is limited by the lack of a basis for comparison. As an experiment, POL/LTP and the evaluation process lacked an explicit control sample, so it is impossible to definitively establish that the capacity-building achievements of a given community or the widespread support for a given perspective would not have happened without our

discursive intervention. It is difficult to determine what an appropriate control would be, however.

One approach would be to identify another site (or sites) with comparable ecological and social characteristics, and then track the course of events in that community during the same period in which interventions were taking place in the other communities. Breadth of citizen participation in public discussions of land use could be compared, as could changes in land use practices and management regimes. Changes in attitudes toward collective natural resource management could be compared by administering a sample survey to the control and experimental populations before and after the intervention. Comparing outcomes of an IPRM-based intervention to those in a community where no organized resource management initiative has taken place may not be particularly instructive, however. A better experimental design might involve undertaking parallel CBNRM initiatives in two communities, one of which used IPRM to engage stakeholders and the other of which did not. The success of, and levels of public support for, each initiative could then be compared.

Using a distinct community site as a control sample is problematic, though. The number of environmental, socio-cultural, and institutional factors influencing civic participation and land use in communities is virtually infinite, so selecting two sites that were similar enough to each other would prove daunting. It would be difficult to establish how much of the final difference between the sites was due to the intervention, as opposed to other factors. To maximize similarity, one would be inclined to choose sites that were located near one another, but proximity would increase the risk that the effects of the intervention would be felt in the control community, thus introducing

potential problems of spatial autocorrelation. In short, comparing intervention methods across methods could yield worthwhile insights, but the comparison would be imperfect.

In lieu of a separate control site, the other possible means for comparison is longitudinal: collecting comparable data in the same community before and after an intervention. This approach, too, is imprecise: circumstances inevitably change in a community over time, so not all change could be attributed to the intervention. That said, before-and-after comparison seems to me the better test of a methodology's effectiveness, because the community being studied initially is the same one that the intervention is designed to benefit. This approach was used to some extent in POL/LTP. There is plentiful anecdotal evidence from Macon County regarding the (lack of) effective public dialogue on land use prior to LTP, which provides a basis for gauging the project's effects on such dialogue subsequently. No such record of prior public engagement efforts exists for POL, so the intervention's effects are only measurable when they resulted in unprecedented forms of collective action.

More systematic collection of baseline landscape and discourse data would strengthen further research on the effectiveness of discursive intervention. IPRM, which was developed over the course of POL and LTP, would now benefit from consistent testing in other locations. Toward that end, I have developed a set of discursive criteria for use in designing and evaluating CBNRM initiatives that employ IPRM or a comparable public-engagement methodology. These criteria are described below.

5.7.2. Improving outcomes: discursive grading for community-based natural resource management

POL/LTP demonstrated considerable potential but failed to fully capitalize on it. Most of my community partners expressed a measure of regret that public support for the projects had not been channeled into more lasting effects on landscape change. I believe that insights from the evaluations can be used to improve the design of similar CBNRM initiatives in the future. Toward this end, I have developed a series of design criteria for effective implementation of discursive CBNRM initiatives. They are listed below in the form of a "Discursive Scorecard" that can be used to "grade" CBNRM efforts. I have included the maximum number of "points" that meeting each criterion would merit, and I have indicated how many of those points I think POL and LTP deserve.

Discursive Scorecard for Community-based Natural Resource Management

Criterion	*Points Possible*	*POL Score*	*LTP Score*
Project Design			
If resource management agent initiating project is not a member of the local community, community member(s) involved as equal decision-making partners from outset.	3	2	3
Initiative's mandate clearly articulated by team at the outset, thereby establishing local relevance and avoiding duplication of existing efforts.	3	2	3
Relevance (proximate) goals established: desired discursive effect of intervention.	3	1	2
Capacity-building (ultimate) goals established: desired change to natural resource management regime	3	1	1
Community/constituency for target resources identified, and project scaled accordingly.	2	2	2
Pertinent organizations/constituencies represented in project team/advisory committee	2	2	2
Strategy and timeline to achieve ultimate goal (capacity-building) established first (this will inform strategy to achieve proximate goal). Two options: 1) *Institutional change from the inside*—if team expects that institution with management/policy authority over resource will be responsive to initiative, then commitment to respond should be secured from institution at the outset 2) *Institutional change from the outside*—if team expects that the institution will not be responsive, then need to plan a campaign that can apply sufficient public pressure to institution	3	0	0
Strategy and timeline to achieve proximate goal (discursive intervention) established: steps to involve community members in co-creating narratives that rally support for desired collective action.	3	1	3
Each project team member's responsibilities in implementing above strategies delineated.	3	1	1
Document/measure discourse/attitudes regarding issue before beginning initiative, to serve as a basis for subsequent comparison.	3	0	1
Data collection			
Goals for informant representativity established from outset.	2	1	1
Community members take ownership of data collection process, to the degree that they and project team deem appropriate.	3	2	2

Continued on next page.

Discursive Scorecard, continued:

Criterion	***Points Possible***	***POL Score***	***LTP Score***
Informants selected to represent relevant subpopulations/demographics.	3	2	2
Peer referral process used to maximize rhetorical clout of selected informants.	3	3	3
Boundaries of team members' social networks actively interrogated, and strategies developed to reach subpopulations that lie outside those boundaries.	3	2	2
Data analysis			
Analysis responsibilities divided by project team. Responsibilities allocated to community members when possible, to outside researchers when desirable.	3	0	1
Preliminary analyses and data presentations refined through structured input from project team members and other community members (e.g. through focus groups, cognitive interviewing).	3	0	3
Public intervention			
Intervention explicitly designed to maximize likelihood of achieving proximate goal and initiating pursuit of ultimate goal: transition from proximate goal to ultimate goal anticipated.	3	1	2
Intervention timed and publicized to maximize participation	2	1	2
Specific publicity strategies designed to attract subpopulations that have historically been underrepresented in community's public discourse.	2	1	0
Hosting and presentation responsibilities divided among community partners and outside researchers to maximize rhetorical effectiveness.	2	1	1
Participant attitudes measured prior to intervention, as basis for comparison.	2	0	0
Dialogue/input structured to maximize participants' representation	3	1	3
Desired collective resource management actions articulated, endorsed by participants	3	1	3
Next step toward achieving desired actions identified; interested participants given opportunity to sign up	3	1	1
Capacity-building			
Project findings and mandates disseminated to appropriate audiences (e.g. participants, policymakers, media)	2	0	2

Continued on next page.

Discursive Scorecard, continued:

Criterion	***Points Possible***	***POL Score***	***LTP Score***
Participants who signed up during intervention reconvened (2 weeks-1 month later) for follow-up/strategy meeting to decide how identified resource management actions will be pursued. Responsibilities divided up. Strategies for recruiting other participants determined. Regular meeting schedule for community group set.	3	0	0
Community partners and community leaders who emerged from intervention maintain momentum and accountability—ensure that steps are being carried out according to plan.	3	1	0
Additional input from public and institution representatives solicited as appropriate.	2	0	0
Community group's management/policy recommendations delivered (through internal or external channels) to institution representatives.	3	0	1
Community group members work with (or pressure) institution representatives to implement desired management/policy recommendations.	3	1	1
Public comment opportunities on proposed management/policy changes are designed to maximize representation, clarity, civility.	3	0	0
Evaluation			
Evaluation timed to follow anticipated date for achieving ultimate goal.	1	0	0
Evaluation strategy jointly designed by project team members and participant-leaders, in order to achieve all parties' evaluation goals.	2	1	2
Evaluation process designed to provide starting point for subsequent initiatives.	3	1	2
Evaluation designed to increase initiative's inclusiveness by involving community members who have not previously participated	3	2	3
Evaluation responsibilities divided among community members and outside researchers in a way that maximizes credibility and reliability.	1	1	1
Project team members/community group leaders/institution representatives use evaluation results to maximize ongoing relevance of capacity-building efforts—either through new strategies of achieving existing goals or pursuit of further goals.	3	not yet	not yet
TOTAL POINTS:	**100**	**36**	**56**

This scorecard may seem an overly rigid evaluation tool, and using it to grade POL and LTP may seem harsh: after all, the projects were not designed with this set of

criteria in mind, so they cannot be expected to meet them all. The scorecard has heuristic value, however: it serves as an indication of how much has been achieved and how much more remains to be achieved. Some lessons from conducting POL were applied in LTP, as reflected by the latter's higher score. The evaluation process, however, has revealed that LTP, too, could have been a much more effective discursive, participatory research effort. If a CBNRM initiative, based in IPRM or a similar methodology, met all of the scorecard criteria, I feel reasonably confident that it would be successful in 1) achieving local discursive relevance and 2) building the community's capacity to collectively effect resource management regimes that protected/sustained shared values.

5.7.3. Extending the capacity-building timeline

Based on review of the POL/LTP community projects and their aftermath, one conceptual modification emerges as particularly critical for boosting future initiatives' success: the moment of intervention (i.e. the public meeting) should be seen as the project's *midpoint*, rather than *endpoint*. The POL and LTP project plans only extended as far as the meetings, which were seen as the goal. Since the outcomes of the meetings were uncertain, we did not commit to any particular subsequent course of action. That was our biggest mistake, because it meant that no organized follow-up took place. If, instead, we had seen the meetings as simply a step toward an ultimate capacity-building goal, then we would have been better prepared to direct meeting participants' energy into subsequent collective action. This approach does not imply that the exact nature of that collective action be anticipated from the start; after all, a central purpose of the meetings is to enable community members to decide for themselves what actions they want to take. If the project team expects a collective action mandate to emerge from a public meeting,

however, then they can make an advance plan for how to facilitate the translation of visions into action.

The timeline for a hypothetical project, in which the public intervention is seen as a midpoint, is represented in Figure 5.4**.**

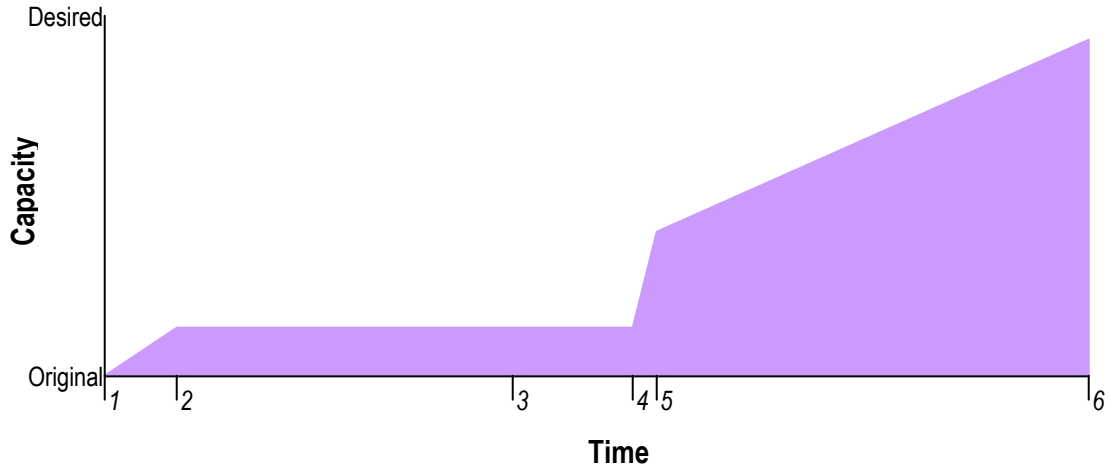


Figure 5.4 Proposed CBNRM initiative timeline, showing expected increases in community natural resource management capacity over the course of the project. Numbered points on the timeline represent successive project stages: *1* = project conceived; *2* = data gathering begins; *3* = data analysis and refinement begins; *4* = public meeting; *5* = follow-up community group meeting; *6* = achievement of desired management regime change.

In this figure, the expected increase in community natural resource management capacity is charted over the course of the project. This representation is purely conceptual, since "community capacity" is hard to define and harder to quantify; I am employing it in a general sense to represent the level of organized collective influence on local natural resource management regimes.

As Figure 5.4 illustrates, community capacity can be expected to increase somewhat at the inception of an initiative (points *1-2*), due to the empowerment and organization of project team members and community interviewers. There is no further marked increase, however, until the point of public intervention (*4*). This does not mean

that nothing is being accomplished during that time; on the contrary, activities such as interviewing informants and publicizing the meetings lay the essential groundwork for subsequent accomplishments. However, this phase does not create capacity per se, because the community members who are empowered or engaged during this time are still diffuse; they will only start to form an organized constituency when brought together through the public intervention. In a sense, then, phase *2-4* can be seen as the buildup of potential energy for collective action, which the intervention releases.

Though triggered by the intervention, the increase in community capacity is only realized through a subsequent action (*5*), e.g. a follow-up meeting where interested project participants decide how to act on the goals that were articulated through the public process. In other words, a lot of excited citizens coming out of a public meeting do not yet have more natural resource management clout than they did before; their power is only harnessed when they subsequently organize. Once this happens, capacity can continue to rise as the community group works to implement desired changes to resource management regimes. The initiative effectively achieves its mission when/if those changes are actually implemented (*6*). When planning out the project, then, a team should be aiming for point *6*, not just point *4*. If they aim to reach point *4* in one year, then they might aim to effect relevant policies/management regimes in two years.

The second half of this proposed project timeline is only conjecture at this point; POL and LTP did not reach points *5* or *6*. This does not mean that the projects had no capacity-building effects: as discussed previously, they helped to facilitate collective management actions in Western Rowan, Stanley Creek, and probably Macon. However, those accomplishments occurred on an ad hoc basis; the formation of an enduring

citizen's group that could undertake a sustained effort to address landscape change did not happen. If IPRM were employed in service of a systematic capacity-building effort, however, there is reason to believe that significant benefits for communities and landscapes could result.

5.8. Revisiting the ecology of discourse

At the beginning of this dissertation, I advanced the hypothesis that *local discourses are ecologically interrelated with other elements of local ecosystems and therefore differ among communities and regions*. Most, though not all, findings from my analysis of POL/LTP discourse supported this hypothesis. The following are general observations about the ecology of discourse that I am prepared to make based on this study.

Discourse showed signs of affecting the environment and of being affected by it. In this study, discourse is shown to function "ecologically," in that it interacts with other environmental phenomena. The effect of environment on discourse, for example, can be seen in the relationship between topographic variation and *topographic* narrative use, or in metonymic references to local springs. The effect of discourse on the environment is manifest in the land use practices of community members: as discussed previously, discourse bounds the possible, delimiting the range of management actions that can succeed in a given community. A discursive intervention can change those boundaries and thereby affect the environment—as the protected tracts in Western Rowan and Stanley Creek demonstrate. In a literal sense, of course, it is physical human behavior, not discourse, that modifies the environment—a person cannot chop a tree down just by

telling a story about it. Humans' collective interaction with the environment, however, is characterized by the social creation of meaning through discourse. I have tried to demonstrate some ways in which the ecological properties of social communication can be approached.

Discourse varied (somewhat) across space. The discourse of each community project differed from the others in terms of narrative composition and abundance, though not completely. From this, we can make the basic argument that discourse does vary across biophysical landscapes—a necessary corollary of the assertion that discourse responds to the environment. This claim is bolstered by beta diversity analyses in which certain narrative abundances exhibit relationships with corresponding landscape metrics.

Community discourses were more similar compositionally than they were different. The preponderance of narratives in project data from the four POL communities and Macon County were shared among multiple sites, suggesting that most of the ways in which communities talked about place were shared at the regional level or higher. This conclusion was supported by focus group findings. The extent of this commonality, however, cannot be established from this research. It is probably not surprising that five rural populations in the Piedmont and Mountains of North Carolina draw upon a largely shared interpretive repertoire. We have not established, however, what proportion of this repertoire is shared with residents of Tennessee—or Thailand. Certainly the symbols and metonyms referred to in distant communities would not be the same, but that does not mean that certain fundamental narrative *types*, representing ways of connecting to the local environment, might not remain constant. Indeed, certain basic

narrative responses to place might be inherent to our species, but testing that possibility would require much broader exploration!

Discursive similarity did not decay as function of distance. The distances between project communities across physical space did not correspond with their relative locations in discursive space; other factors appeared to exert more influence on narrative composition than distance. Again, it is possible that distance might explain variation more effectively at larger scales, but its effect at the regional and interregional scale was not pronounced.

Patterns of discursive variation were scale dependent. At every analytical scale—within-community, among-community, regional, between-region, and interregional-aggregate—the discourse data exhibited emergent patterns of variation. Distinctions among individual narrative types could be discerned in each POL community, for example, but variations in the abundance of *past* and *present* narrative guilds was only evident when those communities were compared. When community projects were compared across regions, however, those guilds were less useful in explaining variation; instead, the *topographic* guild became important. Finally, certain patterns of variation—associated with race or local/outsider status, for example—only became evident when interregional data was aggregated. Certain patterns were artifacts of the research design (e.g. differences between discourse from the documentaries and the meetings), but most appear to reflect emergent properties of the discourse itself. Discursive patterning, then, was not self-similar over the range of scales studied: patterns at one scale could not be used to accurately predict those at another scale. Instead,

discourse exhibited continuous scale dependence: its observed properties changed "with the grain or the extent of the measurement" (Turner, Gardner, and O'Neill 2001: 30).

5.8.1. Predicting discursive variation: a direction for further research

The scale-dependent patterns of discursive variation that emerged from this study lead me to advise against the premature application of discursive insights from one context to a different context or scale. Such extrapolation is tempting, because it would circumvent the need to conduct another round of costly, time-consuming ethnographic research. The risks are great, however: if a pre-existing discursive model does not fit the community or landscape to which it is applied, both the credibility of the research and the success of the resource management initiative may be jeopardized. That said, I do expect further research to become more efficient as guiding theoretical and methodological premises are refined. Eventually, the ecological study of discourse may advance to the point that discourse attributes in a given locale can be predicted fairly reliably based on research findings from other locales. For this to be possible, predictors of discursive patterning will need to be developed.

My dissertation research was devoted to simply characterizing the distribution of discursive formations across study sites. As such, it represents a *synchronic* portrait of ecological discourse: an analysis of the discursive landscape at one point in time. While such a study represents a useful starting point for understanding discursive variation, it is silent on the historical/evolutionary processes through which that variation emerged. Therefore, I have refrained from making causal claims regarding the ecological role of discourse, i.e. I have not argued that a given attribute of the local biophysical environment led the local community's discourse to have a corresponding attribute, or

vice versa. Instead, I have only noted associations between discursive and environmental patterns. In some cases, causation can be readily inferred—for example, it is safe to say that interregional topographic variation influenced interregional discursive variation, not the other way around—but in other cases, the direction of causality is less clear. Did a community's discourse influence its land use pattern, or did the opposite occur? In reality, both almost certainly happened—as historical ecology reminds us, nature-culture relationships are dialectical. The mechanisms of causation remain unclear, however. These could be elucidated through *diachronic* research that examined changes in discourses and landscapes over time. Such a longitudinal approach could prove useful in developing predictors of discursive variation.

Though definitively identifying predictors for particular discursive phenomena is not yet possible, my research does identify certain variables that merit consideration as potential predictors. I have grouped these below:

- *Biophysical landscape parameters:* land use distribution and rate of change, farmland area and rate of change, land cover fragmentation, topographic variation, climate, proximity to water bodies[50]
- *Demographic parameters:* local/outsider ratio, race/ethnicity, population density, age distribution, income distribution, education level distribution, proportion of population whose primary/secondary income is derived from extractive natural resource use, leading employment sectors
- *Institutional parameters:* proportional jurisdictional authority over landscape (private, local government, state government, federal government), parcel size

[50] The latter three variables in this group correspond to McGranahan's (1999) predictors for amenity migration, a demographic phenomenon whose discursive consequences were discussed in Chapter Four.

distribution, local land use regulations in effect, land area under conservation (public and private), jurisdiction of any other management regimes (e.g. common property regimes), private sector organizational resources for collective action (e.g. non-profit/citizens' organizations)

All of these parameters played a role in POL/LTP project discourse, so they may prove useful in predicting discursive patterns elsewhere. Testing the predictive power of these and other variables would be a productive goal for future discursive ecology research.

5.9. Applications: engaging communities in natural resource management

My research also tested the hypothesis that *ecological narratives identified through the participatory, ethnographic research process employed in this study would be supported by community members at large, including those who had not participated in the prior research*. This second hypothesis, like the first one discussed above, was largely supported. The aftermath of the POL/LTP community projects demonstrated the ability of our participatory, discursive methodology to promote natural resource management capacity building. The Macon County Opinion Survey and evaluative focus groups affirmed the persuasiveness of project narratives among community members at large. Based on these results, I believe that the iterative participatory research model tested here—and a participatory, discursive approach more generally—demonstrates considerable potential to engage local publics more effectively and broadly in natural resource management initiatives.

Developing more effective ways of involving communities in natural resource management could not be timelier. My hope is that the discursive CBNRM approach

introduced here can help to address failures in our nation's democratic institutions, in the discipline of ecology, and in the conservation field. I describe each of these failures below.

The rift between the ecological narratives that participants in POL/LTP articulated and the policies that govern natural resource management in those communities is profound. Most of the deeply held values that community members repeatedly expressed enjoy little or no protection under law. The land use that focus group participants hated the most—the crowded suburban highway—is the one that is spreading most quickly across their landscapes. While developers' economic clout, weakness or corruption of elected officials, and citizen apathy have all been blamed for these problems, I have come to see them as signs of something more profound: a failure of democracy.

I would characterize most of the rural North Carolinians with whom I have worked over the past six years as profoundly disempowered with regard to the future of the landscapes they inhabit. While concepts of "disempowerment" and "marginalization" have typically been applied to populations who disproportionately bear the burdens of discrimination, I see them as applying to the almost the entire populace in this case. As previously discussed, rural white citizens of the United States could be said to be the most politically powerful constituency in the world, since they are the base of support for our nation's political leadership. However, even these citizens feel, by and large, completely unable to influence land use decisions. There are no institutional barriers preventing them from participating in policymaking processes; their disempowerment is largely discursively constructed. As such, its effect is every bit as real as any other kind

of disempowerment: it keeps people from taking part. Landscape change is regarded nearly universally as a phenomenon that individuals are powerless to affect; they are resigned to outcomes that no one seems to like. Most people do not even lament this helplessness, because they cannot even conceive of another state of affairs; to fight for a right, one must first understand that such a right could exist.

Though the failure of democracy that I have described is causing ecological damage of unprecedented proportions in North Carolina, the discipline of ecology had little influence on communities' land-use decision-making processes. Most ecologists would probably object that such issues are beyond the scope of the field, but I disagree. Basic research in ecology has been slow even to acknowledge the role of humans in ecosystems, let alone to approach the cultural dimensions of human-environment interactions with any sophistication. Cultural practices such as discourse do not just "impact" ecological processes—they are ecological processes themselves. Ecologists' general lack of appreciation for the ecological properties of socio-cultural phenomena has an applied cost, as well: because of their unfamiliarity with discursive variation, ecologists have been unable or unwilling to frame their research in ways that are relevant to diverse audiences. This has limited their capacity to convey the ecological consequences of land-use decisions in ways that are broadly resonant. Such a shortcoming is ironic, considering ecologists' attention to variation in the biophysical landscape.

The conservation field, like ecology, suffers from a failure of relevance. Conservationists' communicative repertoire is largely insensitive to discursive complexity and variation (the discussion of *change* in Section 4.5.1 illustrates this

problem). As a result, conservation initiatives have only attracted support from a small proportion of their potential constituency. Through increased discursive competence, conservation agents could identify new ways of partnering with communities to protect shared values. Such an approach could reshape the ways in which conservation organizations think about community outreach and land protection.

Through my research, I have developed a bottom-up approach to resource management that has potential to help correct these deficiencies. Through sensitivity to local discourse, resource management agents can help citizens address landscape change on their own terms. Though "community-based" approaches to natural resource management have been used to disguise an abandonment of environmental standards, the approach I am proposing could do the opposite: it could increase the base of support for sustainable policies by empowering communities to meet management goals in ways that reflected their shared values. If the relevance of ecology and conservation were improved, these fields would have a better chance of entering into local land use decisions.

I envision an environmental policymaking process that invites all stakeholders to join the conversation. Stakeholders in the future of a landscape include politicians, researchers, and conservationists, but also the camp meeting attendees, rabbit-hunters, and tomato pickers who care for that landscape. These are the people who do not simply recognize the effects of landscape change—they feel those effects reverberate through their daily lives. More often than not, their views are expressed not as policy positions, but as stories of place. These stories do not all have to agree, but they need to be heard and respected. Through the ongoing, messy deliberation of democracy, the stories should

be deconstructed and then resurrected in new forms. The policies that emerge from this process should extend these rich narratives; if they do, then they may succeed in protecting the cherished ecological and cultural values of the landscapes that people call home.

Appendix A:

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS,
PERSPECTIVES ON LAND AND *LITTLE TENNESSEE PERSPECTIVES*

I. Perspectives on Land

A. Stanley Creek

1. Community partners

Joyce Burt
Richard Rankin

2. Interviewers

Joyce Burt
Erin Culbert
Gabriel Cumming

3. Interviewees

Joyce and Roger Burt
Mamie Cole
Beth Douglas
Senator James and Mary Frances Forrester
Mickey and Lynn Gilmore
Ida Hoover
Robert and Margaret McCorkle
Richard Rankin
Alfred and Doris Rhyne
Barbara and Richard Rhyne
Harry Suddreth
Peggy Teague
Danny Wallace

B. Eastern Catawba County

1. Community partners

Paul Beatty, Jr.
Robert Eades
Spencer Graham
Jerry McCombs

2. Interviewers

Gabriel Cumming
Knights Camera Action (see below)

3. *Interviewees*

Lourdes Aguirre and Kenia Cardenas
Paul Beatty, Jr.
Jerry and Rick Bumgarner
Ray Von Caldwell
Clara Carson
Shawn Cheng Chang
Michelle Deese
Brenda Eades
Robert Eades
Sue Elmore
Todd Ewing and family
Spencer and Kathy Graham
Ray and Ken Hilderbran
Xai Khue Khang
Jerry McCombs
Naomi White-Huitt

4. Knights Camera Action *student documentary group, Mill Creek Middle School*

Faculty sponsor:

Beth Elmore

Mill Creek principal:

Beth Isenhour

Student participants:

William Butler
Alan Chester
Emily Eades
Luke Goodwin
Jeremy Lee
Zack Lowman
Candace Mackie
Megan Sharpe
Lucy Sigmon
Whitney Stewart
Lauren Stutts

Interviewees:

Paul and Shirley Beatty
Una Mae Brown
James Caldwell
Willie Eugene Smith
Robert Smyre

Stanley Stewart
Tommy Stutts

C. Uwharries

1. Community partners

Ruth Ann Grissom
Bobby Hall

2. Interviewers

Gabriel Cumming

3. Interviewees

Robert and Monty Allen
Ralph Beane
Dolon Corbett
Hyatt Grissom
Ruth Ann Grissom
Bobby and Betty Jane Hall
Myrtle Hall
Claude Morris
Scott Morrow
Jewell Saunders
Kevin Saunders
Leonard Simmons

D. Western Rowan County

1. Community partner

Adele Goodman

2. Interviewers

Gabriel Cumming
Adele Goodman
Alexandra Obregon

3. Interviewees

Pablo Garcia Barcena
Darrell and Gerrie Blackwelder
Doug Carrigan
Sam, Gloria, and David Correll
Craig Corriher
Darryl Corriher
Dot Eagle
Ruben Mandujano Gallegos
Adele Goodman

Henry Hampton
Greg Hartsell
Robert, Luke, and Jacob Knox
Sherrie Long
Marion Lytle
Johnny, Karen, Brian, and Shelley Moore
Sally Murphy
Doug Patterson
Frank Patterson
Jane Patterson
Randall Patterson
Guillermo de Jesus Jimenez Rodriguez
Tim Sloop
Tom Smith
Francisca Sola and Paulino Fajardo
Terry and Sue Stevens
Helen Suther
Frank Tadlock
Artie, Libby, and Laura, and Jacob Watson
William and Billy Waller
William and Nancy Wetmore
Virgilio Cervantes Zúñiga

E. Sponsoring organizations
Catawba Lands Conservancy
The LandTrust for Central North Carolina

F. Geospatial/demographic data analysis
Carla Norwood

G. Video editor
Andy Spain

H. Additional photography
Kyra Weinkle

I. Project interns
Meagan Bolles
Jessica Kumar

J. Data archiving: UNC-Charlotte Special Collections, New South Voices *project*
Former project director: Pat Ryckman

K. Interview transcribers:
Breòna Barr

Ian Brailsford
Jessica Colopy
Mike Drum
Connie Forlidas
Clarence Fox
Ruth Faye Griffin
Abby Hilliard
Jason Luker
Kate Mellnik
Joanne Shand
Bonnie Tiernan

L. Meeting videography

Drew Herman
Meredith Judy
Philip Maier
Danny Wallace

II. Little Tennessee Perspectives

A. Community partners

Ben Brown
Dennis Desmond
Susan Ervin
Stacy Guffey
Roger Turner

B. Interviewers

Bill Crawford
Gabriel Cumming
Susan Ervin
Charlie and Mary McLaughlin
Carla Norwood
Deborah Thomas
Mary Yonce

C. Interviewees

Allan Allman
Wilma Anderson
Tony Angel
Rich Bankston
Ronnie Beale
Patrick Bennett
Mike Breedlove
Ben Brown
Chad Cabe

Joe Chavis
John Cleaveland
Wilford Corbin
Bessie Crawford
Bill Crawford
Claudette Dillard
Charlie Dowdle
Phil Drake
Bill Dyar
Susan Ervin
Bill Fouts
Merritt Fouts
Cadon Fouts
Wiley and Allie Gibson
James Guffey
Stacy Guffey
Dick and Gill Heywood
Allison Hill
Thenica Lopez
Kristina Lynn
Beverly Mason
Bill McLarney
Charlie and Mary McLaughlin
Barbara McRae
Jim Moore
Dick and Janet Moulton
Morgan Murray
Ann and Larry Nandrea
Jennifer Nation
Mitchell Owenby
Eric Penkauskas
Guy Phillips
Clayton Ramsey
Dustin Rholetter
Bob and Nancy Scott
Randolph Shaffner
Florence Sherrill
Hank Shuler
MaryAnn Sloan
Dee Smith
Lamar Sprinkle
Rosemary and William Stiefel
Claire Suminski
Roberta and Wayne Swank
Sharon Taylor
Deborah Thomas

JL West
Vince West
Alice and Sally Wooten
Mary Yonce

D. Sponsoring organizations
Macon Tomorrow
Western North Carolina Alliance

F. Geospatial/demographic data analysis
Carla Norwood
With assistance from Amanda Henley and Bev Wilson Jr.

G. Collaborating researcher
Margaret Browne

H. Video editor
Andy Spain

I. Additional photography
Carla Norwood
Ralph Preston

J. Meeting facilitators
Kim Angel
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Appendix B:

SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Little Tennessee Perspectives
Interview Guide

[The most central questions are in **bold-face**. If you do not have time to ask everything, try to cover those questions at least.]

Introduce yourself and the project. Go over consent form with interviewee and obtain consent.

Turn on recorder. Test.

Interviewer says name and date.
Interviewee says and spells name.

Ask interviewee to tell a little about themselves:

Age
Family? (married/single, children)
Occupation

Place

Your home place:

Tell someone who's listening to this where we are. Can you describe this place a little bit as you know it? What are some of the interesting features of this land?

Is this where you grew up? How did you end up here?

[If they did not grow up around here: *Where did you grow up? Tell me a little bit about it. Did you care a lot about that place? How did it differ from this place?*]

How long has your family been on the land? What have they and you done on it or with it over the years?

How have you changed the use of the land over your lifetime? Since previous generations?

Tell me about some of the special places for you on your land.

Are there any particular sounds or smells that you associate with being outdoors?

Macon County/Little Tennessee Watershed/your area

What about this area makes it special or unique to you? How is it different from other places?

In your opinion, what are some of the special places in this area?

What parts of the landscape here do you particularly enjoy/like (and why)?

Streams/River?
Mountains?
Valleys?
Woods?
Fields (what kinds)?
Gardens?
(Lakes/Ponds?)

Are there any particular plant and animal species that are a distinctive part of this area? (Rare, endangered species, etc.) Are there any plants and animals that are particularly significant to you, or that you have personal associations with?

Are there any locally-grown plants (wild or domesticated) that people use or have used for medicinal or other uses? Are there any other uses that people here have for natural products that they can find locally?

Identity

Tell me about your work. Can you tell me a little bit about how you ended up doing the work that you do/did? How did you get on that track? (Did it have something to do with your experience of place growing up?)

If you left the area for work or education, what led you back?

How does your career inform your relationship with the land?

Do you think your religious beliefs have affected the way you relate to land or nature?

Wendell Berry said: "You can't know who you are unless you know where you are." Would you agree with that? Why or why not?

Community

What would you describe as your "home community"? Has this changed over the years?

Do you enjoy living in this community?

Do you find that you have a lot in common with people here? What values do community members share?

Do people in the community do things together? How has that changed over the years?

How has the population of the community changed over the years? Do new kinds of people live here now?

Do you think that land is important to people in this community? In what ways?
What are the different ways that people view the landscape (e.g. do they value the land mostly because it is useful or because it is beautiful?)?

Do you think newer residents and long time residents see the land differently? In what ways? What values do you think they share about land and community?

What is the significance of the river (or streams) *to people in this community? Has the way that people relate to the river changed over time?*

What do you think that policy makers in Raleigh need to understand about the community/place?

Do you think urban dwellers (in, say, Atlanta or Florida) understand the rural experience?

Do longtime residents have a different way of talking about the land than younger residents and/or newer arrivals? How is it different? Are there specific words or phrases that people use to describe places in the area?

Change

Is this area/community changing? What kinds of changes do you see?

What do you think are the positive and negative aspects of change here?

What threats (if any) are there to the land/environment in this area? What is being done or should be done to address them?

Do you think the future of land in Macon County is something that citizens need to talk more about? Why?

How well do you think most people here understand the changes that are taking place? What information would help the public to understand the changes that are happening to land in this area?

Who should have a voice in decisions about how this area develops?
Who should have a say in how an individual uses his or her property? If one person's land use decisions affect the community, should other community members' positions be taken into account? If so, how? If not, why not?

What do you think would be effective ways of getting people more involved in a discussion about the future of Macon County? What types of meetings or other public participation opportunities do you think would be effective?

What information would help local leaders make decisions about land use? What kinds of input from the public do local leaders need?

Do you think most people in this community would support land use planning to protect the sense of place here? How do you feel about land use planning? What kinds of land use policies do you think would be helpful for Macon County?

What policies or incentive programs would help landowners to protect their land if they wanted to?

Overall, what do you hope will happen to this community in the future?

How would you like to see the land used around here?

What places or things about this community would you like to see protected?

What would you like your children/grandchildren to experience here?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix C:

TOPICS ADDRESSED IN VISIONS
FROM *LITTLE TENNESSEE PERSPECTIVES* MEETINGS

Participants in the *Little Tennessee Perspectives* public meetings (held August 2005) took part in a small group discussion process, through which they articulated visions for the future of Macon County. Over the course of four meetings, 127 vision statements were produced. Listed below are the topics addressed by these vision statements. The topics are ranked according to the number of small groups who independently addressed each topic in their vision statements (this number appears parenthetically after each topic).

Increased and improved planning (13)
Protecting water quality/watershed and storm water management (9)
Encouraging incentives for voluntary conservation by land owners and developers (7)
Expanding restrictions on building on ridge tops (7)
Clustering development in appropriate areas (6)
Regulating development on steep slopes (6)
Assuring and expanding affordable housing opportunities (5)
Encouraging economic development that delivers quality jobs (5)
Harmonizing growth with community traditions (5)
Protecting/improving appearance of main commercial corridors (5)
Expanding floodplain protections (4)
Developing and encouraging better leadership (3)
Encouraging mixed use development (3)
Expanding erosion controls (3)
Ensuring provision for and access to emergency services (3)
Imposing impact fees on developers (3)
Improving site design guidelines or regulations (3)
Limiting growth to protect open space (3)
Limiting regulation (3)
Preserving and enhancing sense of place and community for all citizens (3)
Preserving trees (3)
Protecting and enhancing recreation opportunities (3)
Restricting signs and billboards (3)
Enforcing current and future ordinances (2)
Having tourists and seasonal residents bear more of the burdens (2)
Maintaining rural and scenic beauty of rural community (2)
Planning adequate and safe roads/restrictions to ensure safety (2)
Preserving farms and farmland (2)
Protecting cultural and historical heritage (2)
Requiring appropriate lighting/dark sky (2)
Cleaning up river camp sites (1)
Coaching developers on best practices (1)
Concentrating development along existing infrastructure; use capital improvements as planning tools (1)
Engaging more people in conversation about county's future (1)

Encouraging and preserving traditions of self-reliance and independence (1)
Encouraging working forests (1)
Establishing and enforcing design guidelines (1)
Establishing and maintaining historic districts (1)
Establishing and protecting buffers (1)
Fostering better collaboration between county and town (1)
Holding referendum on planning (1)
Including public health in planning process (1)
Involving seasonal residents in planning (1)
Limiting additional highway development
Maintaining area as is (1)
Mandating an environmental review process (1)
Planning for needs of the elderly (1)
Protecting and supporting local businesses (1)
Protecting cultural diversity (1)
Providing incentives and tax breaks for preferred development practices (1)
Providing models of successful planning processes (1)
Regulating junkyards (1)
Revitalizing downtowns (1)
Seeking expert guidance in planning (1)
Strengthening schools (1)
Supporting and preserving National Forests (1)
Supporting heritage tourism (1)
Supporting public education about conservation in harmony with growth (1)

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